Disincarnation

Jack Smith and the character as assemblage

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Disincarnation

Jack Smith and the character as assemblage

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INTRODUCTION

> Flashback. Ron in his dressing room backstage at the ICA, London, body covered in sarcoma scars, and preparing for part two of the show by mixing the ashes of Jack Smith into his makeup. A thick mix of gold flakes and human ashes – his preparation for the summoning of the dead – a pulling them into the body in a present time. Ron's technique stays in my mind as an inconceivable yet inevitable mix – half cool technician, half shaman-magician. A Brechtian stand-in possessed with the purest performance control, possessed on the other side by demons, by voices and tongues. A soon-to-be-dead man in consultation with the already dead and yet only a stagehand, an accountant dragged on-stage to do the books (Etchells 1999:118-119).

One afternoon in the fall of 2007, I found myself upstairs at the Performing Garage in the heart of The Wooster Group's legendary archives staring at a small, old-school TV screen. What I saw on the small screen was a bearded man dressed as a woman with heavy glitter makeup, oriental-looking headscarf, excessive jewelry, and a shimmering, blue skirt. He was speaking in a slow nasal voice, making diva-like gestures with his hands while referring to the sacred brassiere of Maria Montez. He rages on about the foul nature of the commercial film industry and says in a sad emotional voice, "but the worst of all is that nobody thinks I'm acting…or that I'm not a great actor…or even an actor… at all. Or that this stuff isn't even acting" (Smith/Vawter 1997:139). It seemed as if some type of female incarnation was happening alongside several metafictional, self-referential structures, a female incarnation alongside its own deconstruction. I was doing an internship at The Wooster Group and Wooster archivist Clay Hapaz explained to me that what I had seen on the small TV screen was Wooster-performer Ron Vawter's solo performance *Roy Cohn/Jack Smith* (1992), a reenactment of Jack Smith's performance piece *What's Underground About Marshmallows?* (1981). Hapaz explained that Roy Cohn (1927-1986) was a conservative lawyer and though Jack Smith was a flamboyant performer, they had one thing in common: they were both homosexual and they both died of AIDS, as did Vawter himself (1948-1994). As Tim Etchells' description of Vawter's preparation for his Smith-reenactment from the introductory quotation hints at, a physical-bodily insistence à la Antonin Artaud is at play alongside Bertolt Brecht's alienation techniques. Since that autumn day in 2007, I have been hooked on Jack Smith.

Jack Smith was an American filmmaker, performer, writer and photographer and a central player in New York's performance scene in the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s. Smith was a white homosexual man born November 14 in 1932, who died of AIDS-related pneumonia September 25 in 1989. When I started investigating Smith's practice, I quickly noticed the oriental elements in his set design and the costumes of his drag characters. I learned that the inspiration for these elements came from his fascination with the actress and Latin American Hollywood starlet Maria Montez. Smith's practice consists of films, live performances, photographs, performative hybrids, and collages juxtaposing trash and glamour, and multiple drag subjects pointing in many different directions simultaneously. I find, however, that everything in his oeuvre seems to gather around his ongoing Montez fascination and incorporation, with the intention of securing her for his own emotional and artistic purposes, which reminds me of an incarnation practice as the securing or fixating of a character à la Konstantin Stanislavski and Lee Strasberg. I became increasingly curious as to how this avant-garde performer and filmmaker not only negotiated Artaudian and Brechtian traits and a postdramatic multiple drag subject, but also traits from classical acting. How can we understand a practice that oscillates between classical character representation and postdramatic character representation? Incarnation and deconstruction in the same movement or, in other words a practice that presents the physical incarnated self as deconstructed? I turned to theater and performance theory to find answers but came up short. Something was missing in order to understand Smith's work. Smith's practice reverberates in American and European avant-garde performance theater where there are many examples of artists mixing different acting methods and character concepts but a shortage of theory to help us understand how aspects of the classical tradition are present and work in these hybrid acting strategies. This dissertation presents Smith's practice as a missing link toward a more nuanced understanding of performance theater.

Overall aim and research questions

In *The Death of Character* (1996) Elinor Fuchs argues that postmodern theater is dominated by the dissolution or decline of (classical) character in favor of a multiple subject on stage.[1]

[1] The history of the character as well as the classical character is many-faceted and there is no absolute definition of what classical character representation consists of. A fulfilling account of the history of the (classical) character would require several dissertations. Therefore, I refer to Fuchs' account of the history of character in the chapter "The Rise and Fall of the Character Named Character." Fuchs describes the history of "the dramatic 'element' character" (Fuchs 1996:22) from the hero/protagonist from a "classical dramaturgy" (Fuchs 1996:21) whose name was central/iconic and born with pride to the Polish playwright Tadeusz Rosewicz's 1960 play *The Card Index*, whose "hero" takes the approach that "one name is as good as another" even several different names are acceptable

However, I claim that certain elements of classical character representation, such as ideals of emotional identification, are present and underexposed in postmodern theater and contemporary performance theater. To supplement the understanding of Smith's practice and postmodern character representation described by Fuchs, I have developed the term *disincarnation*.

> **Disincarnation** is an assemblage of the classical, Brechtian, Artaudian and postdramatic concept of character. As such, disincarnation is a movement across character concepts including the classical, which is underexposed in theories on performance theater and postdramatic theater. Disincarnation is a practice that never settles in any one of the character concepts but is in a constant process of becoming. Disincarnation does not write off the body, as a sign or symbol but represents a fluctuating body and active materiality paving the way for new ethical-political categories that give a voice to minorities. Disincarnation is related to contemporary performance theater with subgenres such as gender performances, reenactments and remediations, reality theater and participatory theater where the character is both-and in nature: an assemblage of male and female, subject and object, dramatic and theatrical, material and immaterial, performer and non-performer. With the concept of disincarnation, we are better equipped to detect, analyze, and understand:
> 1) character representation in contemporary performance theater between the dramatic and the theatrical and
> 2) how the character and the bodily self is deconstructed in performance theater but can be thought together with bodily presence and emotional layers.

The term arose from my investigation of Smith's practice. Disincarnation is not an attempt to present a new, essentialist character concept. Rather, disincarnation is a performative practice

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(Fuchs 1996:21). Fuchs' account refers to a movement from an organic character built on consistency - the classical character characterized by consistency in inner/emotional construction (Aristotle) and unity (Hegel) that culminates in naturalism/psychological realism (Ibsen) - to inconsistency in character representation through a multiple subject on stage (starting with symbolism) (Fuchs 1996:21-35). When I refer to the classical character/classical tradition, I do not refer to classicist character representation/classicism that has other characteristics than unity and psychological immersion. Rather, I refer to the tradition of representation guided by a consistent, organic character represented by the actor through emotional identification guiding the audience toward catharsis, a tradition culminating in naturalism and continued by Konstantin Stanislavski and Lee Strasberg's method acting. Put differently: To navigate through and examine this complex field I construct various characteristics of the classical character such as consistency, unity, psychological immersion, catharsis, and emotional identification. These strategic simplifications are necessary when dealing with different complex concepts of character. Brecht defined himself in relation or opposition to Aristotle. I define the classical character in continuation of Fuchs' definition.

that reassembles character by inhabiting the intervals between four different character concepts: the classical, the Artaudian, the Brechtian, and the postdramatic. Disincarnation is not a purely discursive exercise but also a bodily exercise. I argue that disincarnation sheds new light on the material (body) in the discursive (language, culture). Disincarnation is characterized by the traffic between the deconstructivist character concept built on theater semiotics and discourse theory and physical performance presence (represented in theater by, respectively, Bertolt Brecht and Antonin Artaud); in other words, the bodily self as deconstructed. There is plenty of theory about the body, presence, and authenticity in theater theory and especially performance theory, but theory on what the bodily self as deconstructed looks like is largely overlooked in theater and performance theory. In Artaudian performance theory, the physical body has been linked to ideas about pure presence and essence. For Artaud, the body is understood as an essentialist, stable category that (re)presents pure presence. However, what happens to these ideas about essence and presence when the body is presented as deconstructed on stage? How does the bodily self as deconstructed differ from Artaudian metaphysics of presence as the absolute presence of the performer? This dissertation discusses presence to challenge the notion of absolute presence as contrasting the deconstructivist différance. I examine how one can think together deconstruction *and* presence. Let me present an example: In the practice of The Wooster Group the bodily self is deconstructed using technology splitting and scattering the body on stage. However, this scattering, deconstruction, or absence of the (stable) bodily self points to the very materiality and presence of the body. Thus, contrary to Artaudian absolute presence of the performer, the bodily self as deconstructed exhibits presence *and* absence, materiality *and* discursiveness, in the vein of both Artaud *and* Brecht. When it comes to the bodily self as deconstructed, there is no opposition between self-referential language and bodily presence as there is in Artaud's theories. With the disincarnation practice, I will argue that the body and the presence of the body can be thought together with Fuchs' multiple, unstable subject: I will argue that a dynamic bodily presence is exhibited on stage. The disincarnation practice will also help unfold another underexposed element in performance and performance theater: how the bodily self is emotional. In performance theater, artists pluck from different concepts of character, they freely mix and match apples and bananas, Aristotle and Artaud, alienation effects, and emotional immersion; however, theories on this phenomenon are missing. So, how is disincarnation a helpful term? Incarnation is a useful term to examine how materiality and emotional layers converge, since incarnation relates both to psychic and physical essence, both to the immaterial and the material. In "Hindu Avatāra and Christian Incarnation: A Comparison" (2002), Noel Sheth notes that incarnation in Hinduism refers to the embodiment of the inner spirit of a superhuman: a

superhuman in the flesh (Sheth 2002:98). In Christian religion the superhuman is God, and Jesus is God incarnate.[2] However, the spiritual in performance theater is separated from religious connotations and, rather, connected to questions of identity and identity-making processes. The term incarnation suggests a fixed identity linked to classical acting theories and character representation including full immersion (physical and emotional) with the character à la Strasberg. I added the "dis" to suggest a simultaneous destabilization of fixed identities à la Fuchs. Disincarnation is both-and: it drives back and forth between incarnation and the destabilization of incarnation. To borrow from Karen Barad's interpretation of Susan Stryker and the Frankenstein monster as a promising figure for queer agency in "TransMaterialities" (2015): Disincarnation is an assemblage resuturing different (body) parts from different character concepts into a beautiful Frankensteinian monster full of new possibilities.

The disincarnation practice unpacks a materially based (emotional) identification and immersion that has been subdued in the postmodern/postdramatic concept of character and provides a more nuanced understanding of character representation in contemporary performance theater such as participatory theater, reality theater, and superstar and movie reenactments. In the new theatrical genres of performance theater, questions of character representation, embodiment, emotional identification, and materiality are renegotiated and therefore call for a reexamination. Disincarnation will provide more nuanced answers to the following questions: How do different character concepts converge in performance and performance theater? How do material and emotional layers converge in performance theater? My analysis of Smith and the disincarnation practice including Smith's acting theories and his insistence on using the audience as participants in his performances and films offer productive tools to examine character representation in performance theater further, especially new theatrical genres of performance theater blurring the lines between audience and performer, performer and private self, amateur and professional.

[2] According to Oxford dictionaries incarnation refers to: "1 A person who embodies in the flesh a deity, spirit, or quality 1.1 (in Christian theology) the embodiment of God the Son in human flesh as Jesus Christ". Accessed May 9 2017: https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/incarnation

Disincarnation in *Roy Cohn/Jack Smith*

This section provides a short analysis of *Roy Cohn/Jack Smith* as an example of disincarnation.[3] In *Roy Cohn/Jack Smith*, Ron Vawter reenacts Smith's 1981 performance *What's Underground About Marshmallows?* Vawter reconstructs Smith's performance from a sound recording, which is the only element of the original performance that remains as a concrete document.[4] The costume, lighting, and set design were a mix of what Vawter remembered from the many performances by Smith he had seen at Smith's loft.[5] Vawter appears in *Arabian Nights* Montez drag veils, ropes, jewelry, and glitter makeup. Vawter ended his performance with a dance as a tribute to Montez. Tim Etchells' impression of Vawter's preparation for his Smith impersonation in *Roy Cohn/Jack Smith* connects to the disincarnation practice. The material and emotional layers converge as the emotional travels unspoken across Vawter's sarcoma-scared body. Broadly speaking, disincarnation shines through in the traffic between Vawter's emotional and material identification with Smith, the exhibition of the multiple drag character, a burning Artaudian bodily presence, and Brechtian alienation effects such as the explicit juxtaposition of Roy Cohn and Jack Smith.

Vawter's performance is founded on a materially based emotional identification of one HIV patient with another. As Etchells describes it, Vawter's performance is both body and sign, both immersion/identification and critical reflection, both presence and meaning, both material and discursive, both Artaud and Brecht. Vawter's ritual of mixing the ashes of Smith into his makeup has various implications; Vawter's preparation is both body *and* sign: The ashes constitute Smith's bodily, concrete material remains. When Vawter applies the mix of ashes and makeup to his body, symbolizing and signalizing the incarnation of Smith, it is a sign of him putting on the dead Smith. Makeup is a sign that tells stories about gender and beauty and is also a way to cover up unwanted elements and change your appearance. When applied to the human body, makeup enters an assemblage with the body. In Vawter's case, this assemblage is a party of three since Smith's bodily remains have entered an assemblage with the makeup before application,

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[3] To see an excerpt from *Roy Cohn/Jack Smith* - Jill Godmilow, USA, 1995, 88 min.: Accessed May 9, 2017: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=G_DUjM4UIQY&t=26s

[4] At Fales Library November on 21 2016, I had the chance to listen to the sound recording of Smith's performance *What's Underground About Marshmallows*, 1981. In his deep melancholy nasal voice, Smith speaks slowly with many pauses, eating chips to the soundtrack of the performance. Sometimes it is very difficult to hear what Smith is saying. The soundtrack combines romantic, old-fashioned music and what could be the soundtrack from a Montez film. The sound recording is transcribed, printed and published in *Wait For Me At The Bottom of The Pool - The Writings of Jack Smith* edited by J. Hoberman and Edward Leffingwell, 1997. Due to breaks in the tape the transcript is incomplete.

[5] The films of Jill Godmilow: Introduction to *What's Underground About Marshmallows: Ron Vawter Performs Jack Smith*, 1996. Accessed May 9, 2017: http://www3.nd.edu/~jgodmilo/marshmallows.html

thereby amplifying the material dimension of the disincarnation. So, there is more body and more than body to Vawter's disincarnation. Let me explain. Disincarnation is at play since the construction of Vawter's Cohn and Smith incarnations is exhibited. First, Vawter embodies Roy Cohn. After an intermission, he embodies Jack Smith. Cohn was a well-known persecutor for senator McCarthy during the witch-hunt on American communists in the 1950s, and later a New York-based celebrity lawyer, who died of AIDS in 1986. Cohn was a rather unpleasant figure who was not able to handle the abject in his sexuality and social position.

Vawter's Brechtian juxtaposition of the two controversial figures inspires the audience to reflect critically upon different approaches to homosexuality and homophobia. On one hand, we have a professional and technically skilled actor in control with a political intellectual message. On the other hand, Vawter's performance is highly personal with its spiritual and almost superstitious identification and immersion: At the foundation of the performance, we have Vawter's sarcoma-scared body telling a story about a man dying of AIDS and therefore very capable of identifying emotionally and bodily with Cohn and Smith who already died of the disease. My point is that disincarnation is at play in the performance because Vawter is practicing a materially based identification and immersion. Whether afflicted by HIV, or a plague-infested body as described by Artaud, the body is in a state of "dizzying collapse" and the "organs grow heavy" (Artaud 1958:15). This kind of disease-ridden body is in a state of emergency and urgency similar to "victims burnt at the stake, signaling through the flames" (Artaud 1958:13). It creates a heightened presence and emotional drama when Vawter's sarcoma-scarred body is presented on stage. The stakes are higher. Vawter was literally signaling through the flames, as he died six months after performing the piece for the last time.

I argue that Vawter is resignifying abjection – in the shape of both a sexually transmitted disease and homosexuality – by embracing, incorporating and glorifying Smith's bodily remains, thus exhibiting a life-affirming defiance of humiliation, persecution, and even death. For both Vawter and Smith, the personal becomes ethical-political as they embrace the abject and thereby produce new cuts between what is cast out of society and what is let into society.

From disidentification to disincarnation (via Muñoz)

I model disincarnation on José Esteban Muñoz's concept of disidentification. Muñoz was a Cuban-American theorist of queer performance and a Marxist thinker. In his book *Disidentifications – Queers of Color and the Performance of Politics* (1999), Muñoz takes on Judith Butler's (*Gender Trouble*) gaze of performativity. Butler does not engage with race,

which Muñoz tries to make up for with *Disidentifications*. Muñoz explains that race is performative in a way similar to Butler's conception of gender performativity:

> According to Judith Butler, a performative provisionally succeeds if its action echoes prior actions, and accumulates the force of authority through the repetition or citation of a prior, authoritative set of practices. For Butler, a performative draws on and covers over the constitutive conventions by which it is mobilized. Butler is concerned specifically with the performative charge of queerness, and it is my contention that this theory is also applicable to the workings of various minority groups (Muñoz 1999:128).

Following Muñoz, race is also a performance made up by repeated acts. The point is that race performativity implies that we have the power and possibility to change these acts constituting race over time.

I will use the term disincarnation in a way strategically similar to Muñoz's strategic use of the term disidentification. In the introduction to *Disidentifications*, "Introduction: Performing Disidentifications", Muñoz explains how he is inspired by French linguist Michel Pecheux's theory of disidentification. Pecheux presents three modes of subject construction in relation to the dominant culture. The first mode is identification, which refers to a "good subject" who identifies with discursive and ideological norms. The second is a "bad subject" who counteridentifies with and rebels against the dominant ideology (Muñoz 1999:11). The third mode of subject construction in relation to the dominant culture and ideology is disidentification. Muñoz describes disidentification as a strategy

> that neither opts to assimilate within such a structure nor strictly opposes it; rather, disidentification is a strategy that works on and against dominant ideology. Instead of buckling under the pressures of dominant ideology (identification, assimilation) or attempting to break free of its inescapable sphere (counteridentification, utopianism), this "working on and against" is a strategy that tries to transform a cultural logic from within (Muñoz 1999:11).

As such, disidentification is a simultaneous acceptance and refusal of the dominant ideology. We must acknowledge it to change it. Muñoz investigates disidentification strategies within theater and performance art by queer people of color and explains how utopianism is an important part of disidentification because disidentification as a mode of performance is meant to dissolve the

dominant codes and present utopian possibilities, make new worlds, and show how the world should be (Muñoz 1999:25). Muñoz also investigates cross-identification, which refers to identification across race, class, sexuality, gender, and so forth. (Muñoz 1999:13). For example, James Baldwin cross-identifies with a white starlet such as Bette Davis (Muñoz 1999:15), or a female audience cross-identifies with the male protagonist (Muñoz 1999:26); gay males cross-identify with female opera divas, but this "does not erase the fiery females that fuel his identity-making machinery; rather, it lovingly retains their lost presence through imitation, repetition, and admiration" (Muñoz 1999:30). As such, gay males often cross-identify with female divas with the purpose of preserving them. Muñoz underlines how the lines are blurred between private desire or identification and our "public" identification. Therefore, we must understand both psychological structures.[6] Queers of color might desire a white heteronormative ideal of beauty and identify with the dominant code, but because it is self-damaging, they desire it with a difference (Muñoz 1999:15). Muñoz emphasizes that disidentification is not "an apolitical middle ground (…) its agenda is clearly indebted to antiassimilationist thought" (Muñoz 1999:18). As such the purpose of disidentification is to inspire minority groups to stand up for their rights. Disidentification offers resistance within the inconstancy of discourse and power (Muñoz 1999:19). Muñoz refers to Professor Norma Alarcón who laid out the first feminist discourse as (women's) identification with the (white straight) woman, and the next feminist discourse as counteridentification with men. However, as Alarcón and Muñoz point out, this type of identification and counteridentification leaves lesbians and women of color out of the equation, which is problematic since they have to tackle multiple antagonisms. This is where disidentification is helpful (Muñoz 1999:22). Disidentification for Muñoz means representing the disempowered by utilizing the dominant codes (Muñoz 1999:31).

Speaking to the difference between disidentification and disincarnation, (dis)incarnation implicates (dis)identification; however, disincarnation extends Muñoz's disidentification to bodily realization and character concepts in performance theater. When it comes to character formation in relation to dominant acting theories, performers in performance theater do not completely emotionally immerse themselves into or incarnate (Stanislavski/Strasberg) the characters, nor do they reach absolute bodily presence (Artaud) nor do they solely critically

[6] For Muñoz, disidentification does not reject psychoanalytic identification theories; however, Muñoz refers to Diana Fuss and sides with her critique of Freud's dualism between desire and identification. Muñoz subscribes to Fuss's rewriting of identification that points to a more ambiguous relation: "where the desire to be the other (identification) draws on the very sustenance from the desire to have the other" (Fuss in Muñoz 1999:13).

counterincarnate (Brecht) the character. I will examine how they disincarnate the characters by working on and against classical acting techniques such as incarnation strategies, which is why their strategies resonate with both classical acting and postdramatic character representation.

Research status: Jack Smith

This dissertation is indebted to previous academic, cultural, and aesthetic studies and research on Jack Smith. Studies and research on Jack Smith are growing in numbers but are still scarce. After his death Smith's archive was left in the hands of film historian J. Hoberman and The Plaster Foundation, Inc. However, funding was hard to come by, so, the process of restoring Smith's work was very long. This is a reason for the lack of exposure of and studies on Smith's work. It was not until 1997 that J. Hoberman and The Plaster Foundation were able to present a retrospective Smith exhibition at MOMA PS1 in Queens. Several academic articles and essay collections were published around this time such as *Flaming Creature: Jack Smith, His Amazing Life and Times* (1997) and a collection of Smith's writings *Wait for Me at the Bottom of the Pool: The Writings of Jack Smith* (1997).

According to C. Carr's article "Flaming Intrigue – What's Happening to the Legacy of an Avant-garde Legend?" a court in 2004 ordered Hoberman & Co. to return Smith's estate to his sister Sue Slater, Smith's rightful heir, even though she never showed any interest in the estate. Hoberman and & Co. refused to co-operate and withheld the estate, hoping an institution would buy the estate and keep it in the public eye. They succeeded in 2008 when Gladstone Gallery in New York bought Smith's estate. In 2015, Smith's estate was spread out to Fales Library and the Film-Makers' Cooperative to make the work more accessible to the public. Gladstone Gallery still holds some of Smith's collages, but Fales Library has the special collection *Jack Smith Papers* and the Film-Makers' Cooperative has some of Smith's 16-mm films. Smith's films *Flaming Creatures*, *Normal Love* and *Scotch Tape* are available to the public at ubu.com.

In 2006, Mary Jordan released the documentary film *Jack Smith and the Destruction of Atlantis*. The documentary provides a rare look into Smith's unconventional world with footage from film sets and performances shown for the first time for a larger public and insights from those close to Smith. Dominic Johnson published the first (and still only) book on Smith, *Glorious Catastrophe: Jack Smith, Performance and Visual Culture* in 2015. Johnson's thrilling study of Smith's practice focuses on a reevaluation of art history post the 1960s. Dominic Johnson laid the groundwork for his later articles and his book on Smith in his (unpublished) PhD thesis *Touching the Dead: Jack Smith, Performance, Writing and Death*, (Courtauld Institute of Art,

University of London, 2007). I wish to mention two other PhD dissertations on Smith: As one of Smith's friends, Uzi Parnes, was able to write an early PhD dissertation on Smith, *Pop Performance, Four Seminal Influences: The Work of Jack Smith, Tom Murrin – the Alien Comic, Ethyl Eichelberger, and the Split Britches Company*, (New York University, 1988). Parnes' dissertation particularly documents, maps, and analyzes Smith's live performance *I Was a Male Yvonne de Carlo For the Lucky Landlord Underground* and Smith's impact on pop performance. In her PhD dissertation *Creating the World Waiting to be Created: Jack Smith and D. W. Winnicott Performing Themselves* (New York University, 2007) Judith Jerome focuses on Smith's performance of self and the creation of a new queer world for social change in relation to psychoanalyst D.W. Winnicott's definition of play as a liminal space producing the self.
My dissertation supplements and expands the reception of Smith's practice by installing Smith in a broader theater tradition pulling him onto the main track by paying special attention to questions about character representation in Smith's practice. My special contribution is to place Smith as a central figure in the development of a concept of character that points toward contemporary theater. I place Smith as a central source in the development of the New York avant-garde and performance theater.

Research status: The character in performance theater

My concept of character *disincarnation: character as assemblage* developed from Smith's practice, points forward toward and is useful in understanding character representation in contemporary performance theater. Fuchs' proclamation of the death of character in postmodern theater is the starting point for this dissertation as I set out to nuance the proclamation. Fuchs argues that in performance theater the organic, self-identical classical character has dissolved and has been displaced by a multiple subject on stage. With his book *Postdramatic Theatre* (2006), Hans-Thies Lehmann also subscribes to the dissolution of what he calls the fictive cosmos defined by classical plot and character-bound drama represented within an illusionary frame. This dissolution of the fictive cosmos is characteristic of his theories on postdramatic theater. Lehmann prefers the term postdramatic to (Fuchs') postmodern because postdramatic is more closely connected to the revision of theater aesthetics (Lehmann 2006:21-22). However, Fuchs' argument is that the postmodern is defined by and is inherently theatrical (Fuchs 1996:157).[7]

[7] For the discussion on postmodern/postdramatic see Fuchs' critical review of Lehmann's *Postdramatic theater* (2006) translated by Karen Jürs-Munby in *The Drama Review*, volume 52, Number 2 (T 198) Summer 2008, pp. 178-183, published by The MIT Press, and Lehmann and Jürs-Mundby's reponses (and Fuchs response to their

At the 2009 Belgrade conference ”Dramatic and Post-dramatic: Ten years after,” Fuchs presented the paper ”Post-dramatic Theater and the Persistence of the ’Fictive Cosmos’: A View from America.” Fuchs argues for the persistence of theater as a representation of Lehmann’s fictive cosmos, which entails a reemerging of the dramatic in the postdramatic. Fuchs analyzes how elements of drama and representation survive the postdramatic, that is, in the work of theater groups Elevator Repair Service and Mabou Mines. She argues that Mabou Mines’ *Dollhouse* (2003) fits “many criteria of Lehmann’s postdramatic. Yet, with characters, plot, dialogue, and a strong sequential story line, this *Dollhouse* was just as surely dramatic” (Fuchs 2009:66). This makes Fuchs ask whether the fictive cosmos and the theatrical – the theatrical understood as the non-litterary layers of performance – can coexist in performance theater. She suggests a simultaneous destruction and welcoming of the fictive cosmos in Mabou Mines’ *Dollhouse*, as well as in later work of The Wooster Group such as *Hamlet* (2007) (Fuchs 2009:66). Fuchs points out that we are following the plot and characters from the novel *The Great Gatsby* in Elevator Repair Service’s *Gatz* (2006) as opposed to a deconstruction (Fuchs 2009:67). Fuchs admits that it has proven difficult to get rid of the “fictional world that aligns all dramaturgical elements into a synthetic whole” (Fuchs 2009:63). She suggests that it is because the dramatic gradually takes the experiments from the postdramatic back in, continues and reworks them (Fuchs 2009:71). My answer to Fuchs’ question is, yes, the fictive cosmos and the theatrical coexist. My dissertation takes the temperature on the state of the characters in what Fuchs’ describes as the simultaneous breaking away from and embraces of the fictive cosmos (Fuchs 2009:23-24).

In “After Postdramatic Theater” (2009), Bernd Stegemann sums up postdramatic theater as an arena where concepts such as mimesis, representation, drama, character, dramatic structure, and dramatic situations are all outdated (Stegemann 2009:12); especially character is obsolete (Stegemann 2009:16). According to Stegemann, in postdramatic theater “theatrical elements must be free from representation” (Stegemann 2009:22). Similar to Fuchs, Stegemann’s hindsight critique is that mimetic theater and the dramatic should not be written off entirely because it is the combination of the theatrical and the dramatic that is thrilling. According to Stegemann, representation still proves to be a strong tool to illustrate the world to the world (Stegemann 2009:23). My critique corresponds with Stegemann’s, and I will explore how the

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response) in “Lost in Translation,” *The Drama Review*, volume 52, Number 4 (T 200) Winter 2008, published by The MIT Press.

character, despite being declared dead and obsolete, has been and still is central to performance theater.

This dissertation does not offer a systematic or comprehensive study of Smith or the developments within character representation. Rather, what I offer is the use of Smith as a prism to reach a more nuanced definition of character representation in contemporary performance theater oscillating between the fictive cosmos and the theatrical. Disincarnation is my attempt to define character as assemblage that entails, among others, the traffic between the dramatic and the theatrical.

Early formulations of how Smith's practice reveals a different side to the deconstructed character, where focus is on incarnation as well as a preliminary examination of the oscillation between incarnation and transformation, and campy surface effects, are outlined in my articles in Danish "Jack Smith: Recirkulering af superstar karakteren" (2010) and "Recirkuleringer" (2014). Early examinations of The Wooster Group (including "confounding devices" in their work) are outlined in my article "Teknologien som medspiller – The Wooster Groups Hamlet" (2008), and my MA thesis *The Wooster Group: samspillet mellem det fysiske og det medierede* (2009).[8]

Theoretical framework

Disincarnation refers to a practice where the traffic between character concepts makes the material and the discursive converge, and lets us encounter the bodily self as deconstructed. To examine this unstable bodily self, I combine theory from theater and performance theory with theories on gender, materiality, and abjection. Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari's *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (1987) leads my theoretical framework and will provide theoretical guidance throughout my project because they offer inclusive models for thinking beyond binary oppositions like discursive and material, mind and body, self and other, male and female, nature and culture. The theories of Deleuze and Guattari provide tools to mediate between the discursive and the material and transgress the opposition between the body and processes of change, which is useful in furthering the understanding of the bodily self as deconstructed. Deleuze and Guattari's thinking in both-and instead of and-or, and the anti-

[8] Tranholm, titles in English: "Jack Smith: Recirculation of the Superstar Character", 2010. "Recirculations", 2014. "Technology as co-performer: The Wooster Group's Hamlet" 2008. MA Thesis: *The Wooster Group: the Interaction between the Physical and the Mediated*, 2009.

Oedipal subject of multiplicity informs disincarnation as a practice that is never fixed but, instead, moves around between the four concepts of character and phenomena such as the material, the emotional, and the political. Disincarnation is a practice or mode of embodying characterized by dynamisms of intersection through character. It is a movement between different concepts of character in a material assemblage, where the material, the emotional, and the political converge. With Deleuze and Guattari, I argue that Smith is becoming-Montez by entering an assemblage with her.

Deleuze and Guattari offer philosophical guidance, however, to provide the context for disincarnation. In questions about character representation I refer to the theater and performance theories of Aristotle, Brecht, Artaud, Fuchs, Lehmann, and others. To examine how the development of different subject formations is closely connected to developments within character representation, I turn to Rosi Braidotti and Elizabeth Grosz. The disincarnation practice offers more nuanced language and tools to understand the bodily self as deconstructed by describing it in positive terms, not only as a deconstructive practice but also as a positively invested practice, thinking beyond binary oppositions toward a positivity of difference – bodily, emotionally, and so forth. My theoretical framework (Deleuze and Guattari, Grosz, Braidotti, Barad) therefore supports a positive productive understanding of materiality and materiality in the discursive.

In my analysis of Smith's practice, I supplement Deleuze and Guattari's theories with Elizabeth Grosz's Möbius strip model from *Volatile Bodies: Toward a Corporeal Feminism* (1994) to unpack how mind and body twist into each other in disincarnation practice. I also turn to Grosz in my discussion of gender and subject construction to understand Smith's critical gender strategies.

In *Meeting the Universe Halfway: Quantum Physics and the Entanglement of Matter and Meaning* (2007), Karen Barad extends Grosz's Möbius strip model to everything in the universe by arguing that everything is entangled. To Barad, there are no dichotomies, only differences and the cuts we make between, for example, mind and body. Barad's theories will inform how Smith's practice produces new positive productive cuts by moving around between centers. Deleuze and Guattari and Barad's theories will also help unpack Smith's practice as a practice of thinking about desire beyond gender and sexual difference. This is where Barad, Deleuze and Guattari, and Smith depart from Grosz and Braidotti who still think in sexual difference.

The notion that bodily presence can be thought together with Fuchs' multiple subject (a subject in constant change) and rethought as dynamic bodily presence is informed by the theories of Deleuze and Guattari and Barad. The notion of dynamic bodily presence is also informed by

Laura Cull's concept of *differential presence*, developed in her PhD thesis, *Differential Presence: Deleuze and Performance* (2009). Cull's project is a Deleuzian analysis of presence. Cull develops differential presence as a large apparatus to 'complicate the notion of presence', in performances by The Living Theater, Artaud, Allen Kaprow and Goat Island, without insisting on the 'outright impossibility of presence' (Cull 2009:65). Cull argues with Deleuze that difference (variation/instability) does not exclude presence (Cull 2009:7). Rather, when it comes to the body "its presence is the presence of (its) difference" (Cull 2009:25). According to Cull, Deleuze offers "an alternative to the over-emphasis on interpretation and the construction of meaning that derives from Performance Studies' embrace of semiotics, critical theory and psychoanalysis. As Barbara Kennedy suggests (…) 'Where was the body and feeling in such debates?'" (Cull 2009:44). My aim is, similar to Cull, to make up for this. Cull contributes to this by focusing on presence in the performing arts with Deleuze's theories on difference, becoming, affect, the 'virtual/actual' distinction, and duration (Cull 2009:9). My contribution is supplementary to Cull by zooming in on character representation, bodily presence and emotional layers. I develop disincarnation as an assemblage of character concepts and focus on how the bodily self as deconstructed exhibits dynamic bodily presence. The context of dynamic bodily presence is primarily the (abject) body and character representation, whereas Cull's differential presence applies to a much larger context.

Smith cultivates the abject to give agency to queer bodies and to present a critique of the symbolic (capitalist) order. To examine Smith's abject aesthetic and drag characters, I adapt Kristeva's theories on abjection from *The Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection* (1982). Kristeva presents the productive and destructive functions and powers of abjection. In terms of subject formation, Kristeva's theories on the abject are connected to something, which threatens the subject and is, therefore, cast out. I take on a more positive productive understanding of the abject in relation to subject formation by arguing that Kristeva's focus on bodily openings (the unfinished body) opens up interim bodily scenarios revealing new possibilities. My use of abjection is informed by Barad's positive productive understanding of the monstrous, queer, and abject body in "TransMaterialities" (2015), and David M. Halperin's examinations of the use of abjection by gay men in order to present new non-moralistic ways of approaching subjectivity and sexuality in *What Do Gay Men Want? An Essay on Sex, Risk and Subjectivity* (2009). Halperin examines how individuals assume the abject (cultivate the abject and take pleasure in it) to transcend social humiliation and as an act of social resistance, similar to Jack Smith's practice.

Theoretical framework: Both social constructivism and new materialism

Disincarnation resonates with both social constructivism and new materialism in the sense that it travels back and forth between the deconstructivist character concept built on theater semiotics and discourse theory and physical performance presence. Therefore, my theoretical framework takes both social constructivism and new materialism into account. However, I will pay special attention to the body. Social constructivism and discourse theory do not suffice when it comes to understanding the status of the body since notions of bodily presence are underexposed in discourse theory. As described by Marianne Jørgensen and Louise Phillips in *Discourse Analysis as Theory and Method* (2002) discourse theory focuses on the analysis of the patterns in language "that people's utterances follow when they take part in different domains of social life; familiar examples being 'medical discourse' and 'political discourse'" (Jørgensen and Phillips 2002:1). To social constructivism that uses discourse theory extensively, our understanding of the world is produced by our history, culture, and social actions (Jørgensen and Phillips 2002:5). In discourse theory, language is dominant in reflecting and constructing both the social and mental reality of human beings (Jørgensen and Phillips 2002:8-9). Discourse theory is thereby rooted in the linguistic turn and pays little attention to conceptions of the body. The body is largely understood as a linguistic construct. To investigate how Smith drives back and forth between the deconstructivist character concept and physical performance presence I turn to the theories of Deleuze and Guattari, Grosz, and Barad. I discuss these theories because they suggest the interdependency of the discursive and the material and grant the body agency.

Maurice Merleau-Ponty's term *the flesh of the world* is a prerequisite for Deleuze and Guattari, Grosz, Judith Butler, and Barad. The flesh of the world implies a crisscrossing of the material and the discursive. In his foreword to the last writings of Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1908-1961), *The Visible and the Invisible* (1973), Claude Lefort notes that Merleau-Ponty rebelled against past philosophy that converted "our body into a thing like any other" (Merleau-Ponty 1973:xxv). In *The Visible and the Invisible*, Merleau-Ponty examines the flesh of the world especially in the chapter "The intertwining – the chiasm." Merleau-Ponty's concept of the flesh of the world expresses his finding that the body and the (discursive) world – subject and object – are intertwined, reversible, and interdependent. As an example of this, Merleau-Ponty explains how the color red is given meaning through the larger whole of which it is a part. Thus, nothing exists in itself; it exists in relation to something else. The red is red in relation to other things: in relation to other things; we experience it as red (Merleau-Ponty 1973:131). This is also true for subject formation: we come into being only in relation to others. Other bodies help constitute my body and vice versa; my landscape interweaves with other landscapes (Merleau-Ponty1973:142-

45). This co-constitution of my body and other bodies implies that materiality is social and vice versa: the social is material. To further understand Merleau-Ponty's concept of the flesh of the world, we must understand that for Merleau-Ponty the flesh is a fundamental ontological category. It is the unity of the phenomenal and the objective body. Different relations to inner/outer, visible/invisible characteristics identify the phenomenal and the objective body. The phenomenal body is the invisible body or the body as sentient (Merleau-Ponty 1973:136). Let me present an example: We exist in our bodies; and if our actions in our daily life run smoothly, we hardly notice our bodies. We just automatically and without even thinking about it pick up a glass of water and drink. Now, if we had hurt our arm, we would turn our attention to our body when reaching for the glass because it would hurt. The moment we think about the phenomenal body, it disappears and is replaced by the objective body. According to Merleau-Ponty, the objective body is the body as sensible body (Merleau-Ponty 1973:136). I can explain this as the subject viewing his or her body from the outside as an object, we see ourselves seeing. We see the body as a thing among other things, an object among other objects, but we are still capable of touching things (the phenomenal body). In this way, both bodies are always present all the time (Merleau-Ponty 1973:136). Merleau-Ponty also explains this by pointing out that there is a crisscrossing of seeing and touching, the visual and the material/physical (Merleau-Ponty 1973:134). Merleau-Ponty argues that we make ourselves a world through the body by making the seer and the thing flesh and it is only through the body that we can reach the things themselves (Merleau-Ponty 1973:134-136). Merleau-Ponty also defines the flesh in the following way: "The flesh is not matter, is not mind, is not substance. To designate it, we should need the old term 'element' (…) in the sense of a general thing, midway between the spatio-temporal individual and the idea (...) The flesh is, in this sense, an 'element' of Being" (Merleau-Ponty 1973:139). I interpret this as if Merleau-Ponty argues that there is an *intercorporeality* of everything and that flesh refers to the sensible in general. He argues that, with the reversibility of the visible and the tangible, an intercorporeal being is open to us (Merleau-Ponty 1973:142-43). Merleau-Ponty claims that the idea passes through the body and only via the body can we reach the idea as he insists, on "the uncontested evidence that one must see or feel in some way in order to think, that every known thought to us occurs to a flesh" (Merleau-Ponty 1973:146). I interpret this as if, in Merleau-Ponty's terminology, flesh refers to a room of possibilities as a prerequisite for thoughts and ideas. For Merleau-Ponty, there is no limit between the body and the world; everything is flesh (Merleau-Ponty 1973:138). The phenomenal and the objective body spring from the flesh. The body image or body scheme is linked to the objective body, which we can reflect upon (conscious representations of the body or when we picture ourselves

and our physical appearance), and the phenomenal body is linked to the body image or body scheme and the non-conscious movement and processes.

How is the flesh of the world related to disincarnation? Disincarnation takes account of the body and the discursive, granting the body agency. Disincarnation implies a crisscrossing of the material and the discursive; compare to the flesh of the world. It is through the appropriation of bodily characteristics that Smith reanimates Montez. Smith's practice is approached through Merleau-Ponty's theories about the objective and the phenomenal body. The body image is relevant to Smith's practice in the sense that Montez is a model for the type of bodilyness Smith experiences but that is not socially acceptable.

In *Volatile Bodies* Grosz refers to the Dutch philosopher Baruch de Spinoza as another central figure who rejected the Cartesian dualism. Spinoza believes that the two attributes, body and mind, are different sides of the same substance that cannot be separated. For Spinoza, substance is infinite and therefore non-individual and cannot provide identity. The individuality of the body is a result of the relations it has with coexisting things. This is what provides an identity to the entity (Grosz 1994:11). According to Grosz, the body is not a fixed thing for Spinoza; it is "a series of processes of becoming" (Grosz 1994:12). Spinoza's model of the body is non-dualistic and anti-essentialist (Grosz 1994:13). Spinoza informs Deleuze and Guattari's theories. Grosz's feminist critique of Merleau-Ponty as well as Deleuze and Guattari is that they avoid the question of sexual difference and questions about female sexuality (Grosz 1994:103). Why is this a problem for Grosz? One explanation is that male bodies are accepted and granted subjectivity whereas women are confronted with prejudice and questions about their bodies all the time and are not granted the same power as men. I will return to this discussion in *Chapter 3* where I will discuss a gender-critical perspective in Smith's practice where distinctions, for example, between male and female are questioned in the sense that Smith's practice shows us new combinations and possibilities.

I focus on the positive possibilities of the bodily self as deconstructed, which is why I turn to the wave of new materialist who set out to grant the (female) body agency and forward ideas about how materiality matters and works positive productively. Merleau-Ponty and Deleuze and Guattari inform the wave of new materialists led by Barad and Grosz. Barad's new materialist theories and Merleau-Ponty's theories overlap: Barad's entanglement of body and world suggests that oppositions are dissolved or to be thought of differently, everything is entangled, which corresponds to the flesh of the world.

In my discussion of gender-critical strategies driving back and forth between social constructivism and new materialism, Butler's theories are relevant. In 1949 Simone de Beauvoir

published *The Second Sex*, and Beauvoir's statement "one is not born, but rather becomes, a woman" sparked the wave of feminists distinguishing between sex as a biological category and gender as a historical/cultural category. In *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (1990), poststructuralist Butler criticizes and aims to dissolve the sex/gender distinction as a means to deconstruct the heterosexual matrix. Butler finds that the matrix limits our sexuality and gender roles and marginalizes, for example, homosexuals. Although Butler does not count herself a social constructivist, there are undoubtedly elements of social constructivism in Butler's thinking. One of Butler's problems with the heterosexual matrix is that it is based on stable identities and categories, first and foremost the male/female binary (Butler 1990:7). For Butler, the problem with fixed identities and categories such as women, men, and lesbians is that they erase the differences between individuals within the groups. This connects to Butler's critique of earlier feminists who, in their effort to grant women agency, presented women as one homogenous group upholding the male/female binary gender system. As Butler argues this is problematic because:

> The presumption of a binary gender system implicitly retains the belief in a mimetic relation of gender to sex whereby gender mirrors sex or is otherwise restricted by it. When the constructed status of gender is theorized as radically independent of sex, gender itself becomes a free-floating artifice, with the consequence that man and masculine might just as easily signify a female body as a male one, and woman and feminine a male body as easily as a female one (Butler 1990:6).

Here, Butler criticizes the male/female distinction because it is bound to the sex/gender distinction. The sex/gender distinction implies a direct, linear connection between sex and gender where our biological sex determines our socially and culturally constructed gender. Butler finds it problematic to use our biological sex to categorize us since it forces the individual to remain within certain categories, for example, that women are feminine and men are masculine. If a man acts in a feminine way or a woman acts in a masculine way, they are punished with the prejudice of normative society and worse. In the essay "Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory" (1988), Butler argues that gender is not a stable identity but an identity "instituted through a stylized repetition of acts" (Butler 1988:519). In the first chapter of *Gender Trouble*, she continues her theories on gender performativity: "Gender proves to be performative – that is, constituting the identity it is purported to be. In this sense, gender is always a doing" (Butler 1990:25). In short, gender is

something we perform. For example, when a certain (gender) act is repeated enough times by enough people it becomes the norm, that is, when girls (and not boys) play with dolls, then the act of playing with dolls becomes associated with femininity. Butler argues that gender identity is bound to the expressions of gender (Butler 1990:25). In *Bodies that Matter: On The Discursive Limits of "Sex"* (1993), Butler emphasizes that the body and our biological sex are also discursively formed and constructed. She argues that sex is not "a bodily given on which the construct of gender is artificially imposed, but (...) a cultural norm which governs the materialization of bodies" (Butler 1993:2-3). For Butler, gender is a performance constituted through our actions, language, gesture and symbolic signs (Butler 1988:519). These actions shape the subject's body as well its spirit and mind.

New materialists have criticized Butler for not paying enough attention to the biological body. In the paper "Open Forum Imaginary Prohibitions – Some Preliminary Remarks on the Founding Gestures of the 'New Materialism'" (2008), Sarah Ahmed describes how the new materialism movement from the 21st century (Vicki Kirby, Barad) points out that social constructivism has forgotten the biological body and how matter matters (Ahmed 2008:32). Butler's book *Gender Trouble* receives critique from Kirby and Barad who argue that Butler is overlooking the biological body. However, as Ahmed notes, Butler actually addresses this critique in *Bodies that Matter*. Ahmed argues that Butler does have a concept of the body; she does pay attention to the body and:

> …offers a powerful exploration of how histories are sedimented in the very 'how' of bodily materialization: it makes sex material, even if it does not offer a theory of the coming into being of the material world, as such. To ask it to do so would seem unjust: as if accounting for the materiality of sex is too partial, not enough, insufficient. The reading of Butler as anti-matter seems to be motivated, as if the moment of 'rejection' is needed to authorize a new terrain. The argument that feminism has reduced matter to culture, I would suggest, loses its object somewhere along the way (Ahmed 2008:33).

Here, Ahmed describes, that Butler examines how histories are anchored in how the body works, making sex material to Butler, which is what many theorists and critics forgot when first reading Butler and what was lost in the general reception of Butler. The performative is a way to describe a cultural state, but it also reaches back to the relation between phenomenology and poststructuralism. Both Butler and even Jacques Derrida have a phenomenological basis through an understanding of the performed identity as a bodily/material identity. This is another reason

why I argue that my understanding of the disincarnation term and the use of it in performance theater is not so much in opposition to deconstruction and performativity as it is an underexposed aspect of it. Similarly, Butler's concept of the body and materiality is an underexposed aspect of her social constructivism, however to reach a more nuanced and complex understanding of the material in the discursive and vice versa, I need the theories of Karen Barad.

New materialist and anti-essentialist Barad takes Butler's theories a step further in granting the body agency by understanding the body – not as a linguistic or cultural construct or essence – but as entangled in the world. For Barad, everything is entangled and inseparable from one another and always active. Barad as well as Deleuze and Guattari argue that materiality is not identical with static essentialism but can be thought together with a subject in constant change. Entanglement and becoming transgress the opposition between the body and processes of change that we find in discourse theory and the popular conception of deconstruction. I will build on the both-and approach of Deleuze and Guattari and Barad to subject and gender construction. In her master's thesis, *Kroppen virker, feminisme, sex og subjektivitet hos Asta Olivia Nordenhof og Sugar Tits* Marie Løntoft concludes that

> a kind of post constructionist gender body increasingly seems to appear: An insistence on the fact that the material body is very real but that this bodily reality functions precisely because of the constructions it interacts with. Similarly, a kind of post performative *I* takes shape: a real and productive *I* that both includes and transgresses the performative self-consciousness (My translation, Løntoft 2012:78).[9]

With the disincarnation practice, I build on Løntoft's conclusion that the bodily reality points to the constructions it intersects with or, as Merleau-Ponty would phrase it, that one constitutes the other and vice versa.

Two movements arose from the revolt against the sex/gender dichotomy: gender constructivism led by Butler's performative gender and new materialism led by Braidotti, Grosz, and Barad. As Løntoft explains it, both movements unite the material and the discursive in a hybrid understanding of gender and see materiality as an open unfinished process. However, Butler and Braidotti are still primarily enshrined in respectively gender constructivism (the discursive) and new materialism (the material) (Løntoft 2012:18). Since Smith and the disincarnation practice

[9] Løntoft, title in English: *The Body Works, Feminism, Sex and Subjectivity in Asta Olivia Nordenhof and Sugar Tits* 2012.

constantly attests to the inseparability and interdependency of these two (and other) positions, I need the theories of Barad and Deleuze and Guattari thinking beyond binary oppositions such as mind and body, material and discursive. I will argue that Smith predated the post performative *I* with his practice in which the bodily reality constantly points to the constructions it intersects with and vice versa.

Itinerary

Chapter 1 provides the context for disincarnation by introducing Smith's practice and the practice of Maria Montez. I go on to sketch the leitmotifs in Smith's collection of photographs *The Beautiful Book*. I introduce the politics of Smith's practice with Muñoz and explain how disincarnation is an extension of disidentification. Next, I present four key concepts of character: the classical, Brechtian, Artaudian, and postdramatic. I argue that, despite their differences, these four concepts of character and the disincarnation practice negotiate ideals about presence, emotional identification, and release, as well as authenticity. Finally I introduce four core concepts in the theories of Deleuze and Guattari: assemblage, becoming, becoming-woman and the Body without Organs.

Chapter 2 contains an analysis of Smith's practice as an exemplary case study for disincarnation. I start by mapping disincarnation in relation to Smith's acting manifestos. Next, I unpick Smith's disincarnation practice by arguing that Smith's entire life and practice is characterized by becoming-Montez. I will analyze how Smith's becoming-Montez practice places the four concepts of character in continuous variation, with one of the results being a merger of a material body and emotional layers. I move on to analyze surface effects and how the outside leads to the inside in a photograph for Smith's performance *I Was a Male Yvonne de Carlo for the Lucky Landlord Underground*. I further explore Smith's disincarnation practice by analyzing Smith's failure aesthetic and the positive possibilities of abjection and trash in Smith's live performance *The Secret of Rented Island*. I then analyze how a masochist aesthetic and the oriental connect and express themselves in Smith's film *Normal Love*. I also examine disincarnation and the positivity of the material in Smith's text *The Memoirs of Maria Montez or Wait for Me at the Bottom of the Pool*.

Chapter 3 discusses Smith's critical gender position and the blurring of bodily boundaries in Smith's film *Flaming Creatures* using the works of feminist theorists Grosz, Braidotti, and Barad, as well as Deleuze and Guattari.

Chapter 4 presents some of Smith's predecessors in the avant-garde and analyzes aspects of disincarnation in performance theater. I conclude that Fuchs' multiple subject can be thought together with character, self, psychology and bodily presence. The multiple subject does not dissolve these qualities but reassembles and rethinks them as dynamic phenomena with ethical-political potential.

CHAPTER 1: DISINCARNATION AS A PERFORMATIVE PRACTICE

Chapter 1 will provide the context for disincarnation through an introduction to the practices of Jack Smith and Maria Montez as well as a presentation of the four concepts of character: the classical, Brechtian, Artaudian, and the postdramatic.[10] In my introduction to the four concepts of character I will focus on the relationship between presence and character. *Chapter 1* also introduces four central concepts in the theories of Deleuze and Guattari: assemblage, becoming, becoming-woman and the Body without Organs as access codes to the disincarnation practice.

Introducing Jack Smith and Maria Montez

The practice of Jack Smith

Smith's best-known works are his films *Flaming Creatures* (1963) and *Normal Love* (1963), but films are just a small part of Smith's oeuvre that also consists of photography, writings, and not the least theater and performance. A central source of inspiration for Smith throughout his practice is Maria Montez who appeared in a string of Hollywood film from the 1940s. In the theater and film scene, Smith not only performed in his own pieces, he also starred in other artists' work. For example, he starred in films such as Andy Warhol's *Batman/Dracula* and Ron Rice's *The Queen of Sheba Meets the Atom Man and Chumlum* (1963). In the theater scene, he appeared as "Mr. X" in Charles Ludlam's *Big Hotel* (1967), as the Walrus in Robert Wilson's *Life and Times of Sigmund Freud* (1969), and as "the magician" or the man with the top hat and Cape in Wilson´s *Deafman Glance* (1971). Smith also made the costumes for The Play-House of the Ridiculous Repertory Club (Leffingwell 1997:77-78).

The reception of Smith's practice

Before taking a closer look at Smith's practice, I will talk briefly about the reception of his practice. Smith is underexposed in Danish as well as international research. There are several reasons for this. First, as Gary Morris points out in "Raging and Flaming: Jack Smith in

[10] These four concepts are not absolute concepts and are constructed for the purpose of analytical clarity in my analysis.

Retrospect" (2000), many of Smith's performance pieces were not recorded. If you wanted to see Smith's work, you often had to partake in the work, as photographer Uzi Parnes writes in the article "Jack Smith Legendary Filmmaker, Theatrical Genius, and Exotic Art Consultant" (1994):

> In 1970, Smith moved into a two-story loft in SoHo, at 36 Greene Street of Grand Street. He called it "The Plaster Foundation," and he began presenting a series of performances there every Saturday at midnight by the Reptilian Theatrical Company. Smith was the only permanent member. A few performers reappeared for weeks at a time, and the rest were drafted from the audience (Parnes 1994:168).

A cornerstone of Smith's practice is audience participation. In *Queer Theater* (1978), Stefan Brecht describes his experience of attending Smith's performance *Withdrawal from Orchid Lagoon* (1970). When Stefan Brecht arrived: "Smith explained, more or less mumbling, that there were no actors, put it up to us if perhaps we should just listen to some records, but gradually seemed to decide, walking about, puttering, to go ahead, asked for volunteers for acting, finally two boys (…) grudgingly agreed" (Stefan Brecht 1978:10-12). With many of Smith's performances taking place at his private loft, the distinction between life and art is blurred. For Smith, life and art interweave: His life was an artwork in constant process. Smith's home was a film and theater set.

Another reason for the lack of exposure of Smith's work is Smith's fear of falling under the spell of commercialism, which made him sensitive toward anyone who wanted to sell and promote his work. Smith deliberately tried to keep his work out of reach for the broader public eye since he did not want to commercialize it. The best example of this is his fall out with Jonas Mekas. Mekas is a writer and worked as a film critic for the magazine *Film Culture*. As Edward Leffingvell points out in "The Only Normal Man in Baghdad" (1997), Mekas wrote about tendencies in the underground film scene and its montage techniques, dramaturgical dreamscapes and deconstruction of images inspired by poets such as Rimbaud, Burroughs and Baudelaire. The underground filmmakers saw conventional morality and religion as a threat to society, which was also true for Smith and his work. This is part of the reason why Mekas became interested in Smith. Mekas published several of Smith's essays in *Film Culture*, for instance, "The Perfect Filmic Appositeness of Maria Montez" (Leffingwell 1997:72-73). According to Leffingwell, Smith accused Jonas Mekas, who presented the movie to the public, of stealing the original of *Flaming Creatures* to profit from it (Leffingwell 1997:81). This is also

one of the themes in *What's Underground About Marshmallows?* Smith clearly states in his deep melancholy nasal voice: "I want to be uncommercial film personified" (Smith 1997:137). In the first part of the performance Smith attacks Jonas Mekas by accusing him of duplicating Smith's film (*Flaming Creatures*) to profit from it. In the performance, Smith calls Mekas Uncle Roachcrust, Uncle Filmcrust, Uncle Artcrust, and Uncle Pawnshop and complains about Mekas getting away with his crimes. This is another example of how the life/art distinction is blurred in Smith's practice. In the article "You Don't Know Jack" (2007), Steve Gallagher explains how Smith, after the struggle with Mekas, stopped finishing his works so that they could not be promoted, sold or diluted:

> The controversy around *Flaming Creatures* marked a turning point in Smith's life. Afterward, he continued to produce 16-mm films, but he never completed anything; he eschewed the finished product and screened his films only as works-in-progress. For Smith, art was entirely about the process of creation, and the distinction between life and art was therefore blurred. He also became increasingly polemical, attacking capitalism, ownership and careerism. But his invective was often so couched in metaphor — "O Maria Montez, give socialist answers to a rented world!" (Gallagher 2007).

This is an example of how the personal is political in Smith's world and how Smith turned to Montez for answers. Smith takes it very personally that Mekas, in Smith's view, tried to profit from him and his film as he indirectly states in *What's Underground About Marshmallows?* This connects to Smith's political Marxist views on ownership and capitalism. Carr explains how Smith was famous in the art world but unable and unwilling to promote himself. This meant that many of the artists he worked with and influenced became much more famous than him, as Carr points out:

> He gave Robert Wilson his glacial pacing. He gave Andy Warhol the idea of using non-actors for his films and incorporating mistakes. Smith was the original DIY artist, scavenging on the streets to get material for props, sets, and costumes. A chapter called "The Sheer Beauty of Junk" in Stefan Brecht's *Queer Theatre* sets Smith up as the forefather to Charles Ludlam, John Waters, and others who dared to mix the sublime with the Ridiculous. Richard Foreman called him "the hidden source of practically everything that's of any interest in the so-called experimental American theater today" (Carr 2004:1).

In Mary Jordan's documentary *Jack Smith and the Destruction of Atlantis* (2006), Laurie Anderson calls him "The Godfather of Performance Art" (Anderson in Jordan, 2006). C. Carr also describes Smith as a "performance artist before such a term existed" (Carr 2004). Smith's practice also reverberates in the work of artists such as Carolee Schneemann, Cindy Sherman, Matthew Barney, and David Lynch, to name just a few.

Castle of trash

Leffingwell tells the story of how Smith was born in Ohio and how his father died when Smith was a child. Smith's mother raised him and his sister, Sue. According to Leffingwell, Smith moved to New York around 1953. Here he became a part of the underground performance scene, a melting pot of creative artists, musicians, performers, and filmmakers. He quickly adopted a bohemian lifestyle where he experimented with drugs, communal living, and sexuality and called himself queer (Leffingwell 1997:71). Leffingwell briefly touches upon Smith's politics and argues that Smith fought against capitalism, conventional morality and conformity. As Leffingwell notes, in much of Smith's work the lobster appears, spineless and cannibalistic, as the image of all the evil in the world such as private property, capitalism, and government. Smith also wrote the critical essay "Lobotomy in Lobsterland" (Leffingwell 1997:73-74). According to Leffingwell, this is also why Smith referred to Jonas Mekas as "Uncle Fishhook" (Leffingwell 1997:81). Stefan Brecht elaborates on Smith's autodidact language: "The Lobster is maybe the system, Atlantis this earthly paradise, Uncle Fishhooks are critics/exploiters of artists: renting – selling something and even so keeping it or making people pay for time" (Stefan Brecht 1978:160). I will return to a discussion about the implications of Smith's autodidact language in the section "The politics of Smith's practice."

According to Leffingwell, Smith was very poor throughout his life. This is supported by the huge pile of tax notices about unpaid taxes dating from 1984-1989 that I saw going through the collection *Jack Smith Papers* at Fales Library. However, Smith was good at seducing friends and passing strangers into performing in his films and performances. He also had a talent for appropriating other artists' material and using and transforming it for his own artistic purposes (Leffingwell 1997:72). Smith was an autodidact artist, but this did not stop him from becoming an original photographer, filmmaker, performer and costume designer. Having no money, Smith turned to the streets for material and picked up the trash of the American culture and turned it into art with his distinct DIY Smithian trash aesthetic (Leffingwell 1997:70). As Stefan Brecht

describes it Smith assembled and arranged heaps of junk on stage (Brecht 1978:12). As I will unpack later, many critics considered Maria Montez's films corny, bad or as the "trash" of American culture. However, Smith saw beauty and authenticity in Montez's performances and transformed them into his own castle of trashy artistic strategies.

Performative hybrids

Smith made film, theater and photographs but he also blurred the lines between these artistic genres with several performative hybrids. I argue that Smith's practice, in form as well as content, is characterized by superpositions.[11] As Leffingwell notes, Smith enjoyed working in a cross-cultural field in which he combined live performance with slide projection, music, and film into performative hybrids of artistic genres (Leffingwell 1997:70). In this sense, Smith's performative hybrids are in all states simultaneously, that is, in all genres and medias at the same time. In 1968, Smith turned his loft into The Plaster Foundation a "free" theater where he: "Obsessively rearranged sequences of *Normal Love* and arranged screenings of the unfinished project *Kidnapping and Auctioning of Wendell Willkie by the Love Bandit*" (Leffingwell 1997:78). With his performative hybrids of film, theater, and slides, Smith's focus was not on the final product. The performances were durational performances and on-going events and, as Leffingwell puts it, "along the way he collapsed the distinction between the development of an event and its performance" (Leffingwell 1997:70). This is another example of how Smith blurs the distinction between art and life: His life was an artistic state and vice versa.

Turning to the content of Smith's work superpositions are also at play since Smith's art displays various emotional, visual, and physical states simultaneously: horror and joy, ugliness and beauty, male and female. On October 17, 2016, I visited the Film-Makers' Cooperative in New York to watch several of Smith's 16-mm films. Mary Magdalene Serra, a filmmaker, curator and executive director of Film-Makers' Cooperative, screened the films for me. J. Hoberman was Serra's teacher and, when Smith died, Hoberman asked Serra to help him clean out Smith's apartment. She brought a camera and filmed the whole thing calling the video *Jack's Place*. Serra described to me the apartment, whose now former inhabitant was a very poor and sick

[11] According to Karen Barad, in quantum physics "superpositions represent ontologically indeterminate states – states with no determinate fact of the matter concerning the property in question" (Barad 2007:265). As such, if a property is indeterminable, it is potentially in all states simultaneously.
Superpositions (1979) contains an essay by French philosopher Gilles Deleuze (1925-1995) and a script by Italian actor, writer, poet, and film director Carmelo Bene (1937-2002). Here superpositions refer to scenic elements put in constant variation and thereby hard to determine and potentially in all states simultaneously.

man. So, as one would expect, the apartment smelled like urine, disease, and was very dirty but filled with the most beautiful art (such as the woman with three breasts). Like so much of Smith's art, the abject and the beautiful intertwine in Serra's description. Serra attended Smith's funeral where incenses were being burned, and everybody had a Smith story to tell. One woman recollected how she was visiting Smith one time. She was wearing a white vinyl jacket. Smith was eating pasta, and when he saw her in the jacket, he threw the pasta all over her, transforming her and the jacket into a Smithian work of art: ugly, dirty, trashy, and beautiful at the same time. Across these different states exhibited simultaneously something appears that was not visible or known to us before. A transformation happens that presents a new utopian world.

Maria Montez: Life and work

Smith was obsessed with the actress Maria Montez and he saw her as the greatest superstar of all time. Before I get into Smith's obsession with Montez, I will present a brief introduction to her life and work. According to David Ragan's book *Movie Stars of the '40s* (1985), Maria Africa Vidal de Santos Silas y Garcia was born on 6 June, 1912, in Santo Domingo in the Dominican Republic. Her father, Ysidoro Garcia, worked as consul general to Spain, and Montez spent a good part of her childhood and adolescence in a convent in the Canaries. In the 1930s, Montez's father's work brought the family to Ireland where Montez met William McFeeters, her first husband. Montez found work as a model in both in England and America before being hired by Universal Pictures in Hollywood. Under the guidance of Universal, Montez reinvented herself by changing her last name to Montez after Lola Montez, a dancer her father loved (Ragan 1985:141-42). After appearing in smaller roles in her first films – *Boss of Bullion City* (1940), *The Invisible Woman* (1940) and *Lucky Devils* (1941) – Montez was given roles as the leading lady in a string of escapist melodramatic films from the 1940s produced by Universal Pictures. With these roles she rose to stardom and had her Hollywood days of glory in the 1940s. The first escapist film was *South of Tahiti* from 1941. She went on to star in other escapist melodramas from Universal Pictures such as *Arabian Nights* (1942), *White Savage* (1943), *Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves* (1944), *Cobra Woman* (1944), *Gypsy Wildcat* (1944), and *Sudan* (1945), all of them alongside Jon Hall. *Arabian Nights* and *White Savage* were two of Universal's first films in Technicolor and the films earned Montez the title The Queen of Technicolor. As several of the titles imply, these are films that thematize exotic oriental universes. Montez's films are referred to as escapist since they displayed Hollywood's pastel-colored fantasies of the exotic Orient,

1. Walter Wagner Productions/Mighty Productions. Maria Montez in *Arabian Nights* (1942).

which were meant to make the audience forget about and escape from the Second World War raging on in real life and be seduced by the fantasy world on screen. In her book *Filmdivaer: Stjernens figur i Hollywoods melodrama 1920-1940* (1997), Bodil Marie Thomsen explains that in the melodrama film genre during the 1920s-40s the private and professional image as well as the fictional roles and the individual personality and look of the film stars were made identical,

as if they were one and the same.[12] This meant that the film stars became an accumulation of fiction from the creation of an artist's name to their film characters. One of the reasons for this was a widespread practice of typecasting in Hollywood. The body and the star became a sign: The stars portrayed the same type of character in every film. The type would be easy to read and fit into the simple dramaturgy of the melodrama and depend on the look and physiognomy of the star (Thomsen 1997:78-79). In Montez's case, she had, in Hollywood's eyes, an exotic origin and look, which was then cultivated in her type. She was typecast as the Latin American character. As mentioned earlier, Universal Studios helped create the stereotypical Latin American starlet Maria Montez as the mystical oriental beauty by fusing her screen persona and her private self. Off screen, Universal Pictures encouraged Montez to dress like the stereotypical erotic oriental woman from the escapist films and made her cultivate her Spanish accent. In his biography, *Sun and Shadow* (1977), French actor Jean-Pierre Aumont, who married Montez on July 13, 1943, describes the first glimpse he got of Montez in 1943:

> One evening, as I was waiting for someone at the Beverly Wilshire, the most radiant apparition emerged from the elevator. Covered with gold and topaz like some Byzantine idol, hair floating on royal shoulders, Maria Montez crossed the lobby and disappeared into the streets. How beautiful she was! (Aumont 1977:80).

This description is a testament to the image or persona cultivated by Hollywood. According to Thomsen, the image of the star was defined by a construction of the authenticity of the body and often functioned as a point of "fleshly presence" (Thomsen 1997:83). Thomsen investigates why female film star icons from the 1920s to the 1940s still fascinate us today. The fascination shines through in the recirculation or re-performance of these stars such as Marlene Dietrich, for example, by Madonna in her campy sacralizing of the Dietrich and Monroe figures, where Madonna re-invests the body as a *hyper-sign* (Thomsen 1997:104). What kind of female film star iconography is re-performed? According to Thomsen, the first Hollywood stars, Mary Pickford and Douglas Fairbanks, entered the world in the years 1914-18 and the concept spread very quickly. The star is connected to the melodrama. The melodrama was a central part of the film industry during the 1920s-1940s. Thomsen explains how the melodrama was characterized by a certain exotic fiction where the body became an object promoting and connecting beauty, youth, glamour, and sex (Thomsen 1997:98). In the 1920s, the golden era of Hollywood films, the

[12] Thomsen, title in English: *Film Divas: The Figure of the Star in Hollywood's Melodramas 1920-1940*. 1997.

Hollywood star system was created, and the stars added glamour to the films. Typecasting is closely connected to the Hollywood star system. According to Thomsen, the Hollywood star system was fully established in 1922 by the time each Production Company had hired several stars. The stars were bound by strict contracts to the production company and were not allowed to make films for other companies during their contracts. Thomsen notes that Theda Bara's contract with Fox said that she could not marry during the three-year contract and that she could show herself in public only while wearing a veil. The stars were vital to the production companies because the Hollywood studio system meant that the production companies got a cut of the ticket sale. And what sells tickets? A star! Many of the female archetypes were developed with the melodrama: the mistress, the innocent virgin type, the divine or mysterious, the femme fatale/the vamp. Regarding the Hollywood star system Thomsen underlines how the stars had to be easily recognizable from film to film, and makeup and costume were essential to this process. Certain type features were enhanced through makeup and costume, the oriental was enhanced in Montez's case by heavy makeup, scarves, veils, turbans, and so forth (Thomsen 1997:112). After the Second World War, the Hollywood star system and the Hollywood studio system entered a crisis due to the dawn of television (Thomsen 1997:97-103).

2. Walter Wagner Productions/Mighty Productions. Maria Montez in *Arabian Nights* (1942).

The fabrication of stars

Aumont explains that he married Montez on July 13, 1943, after Montez had consulted with her astrologer about the date. Shortly after their wedding day, Aumont was sent to war in Europe (Aumont 1977:81-83). He returned to Maria after the war in 1945. They had been separated for 18 months. Maria soon became pregnant, and Aumont filmed *Heartbeat* (1946) with Ginger Rogers and went on to star in *Song of Scheherazade* (Aumon 1977:119-122). In relation to being cast in *Song of Scheherazade*, Aumont describes how the Hollywood machine cultivated feuds between their stars. Aumont had the impression that he was to star alongside Montez in the 1947 Universal Production *Song of Scheherazade*:

> However, it was not with her that they intended me to work but with Yvonne de Carlo, whom they were trying to set up as a rival to Maria. At that time, it was the policy of all the studios to create such oppositions among their stars under contract. Thus, Debbie Reynolds was brought in to replace Judy Garland, Gregory Peck to oppose Clark Gable, Ava Gardner to supplant Lana Turner. If a star did poorly at the box office or became difficult, (a) replacement was right there to take over (Aumont 1977:122).

Aumont's story exhibits Hollywood's exploitation of the actors and actresses. Upon his return to Hollywood after being away for 18 months Aumont also describes how "they had fabricated some new stars" (Aumont 1977:127). Yvonne de Carlo had replaced Montez in *Frontier Gal* (1945) after Montez turned down the role. In *Salome where she danced* (1945), De Carlo also substituted for Montez. These roles set up de Carlo to be the new star of the escapist films. Yvonne de Carlo is mentioned several times in Smith's work. Smith despised de Carlo because she challenged Montez's star status. Aumont also described how he and Montez landed in Paris in 1946 and faced more photographers than expected upon landing. Maria's appearance surprised the photographers: "Maria, wearing a simple tailored suit and no jewelry, seemed altogether different from the ornate siren whose image Universal had been promoting!" (Aumont 1977:125). In this way, she was a victim of Hollywood's stereotypical portrayal of the exotic other and the Hollywood star system setting up rivalry among the stars. Aumont and Montez starred opposite each other in *Siren of Atlantis* (1949) as Lt. André St. Avit and Queen Antinea. After this, the couple considered moving to Paris. On a visit to France, Aumont and Maria visited Jean Cocteau, who was a friend of Aumont, and the three of them discussed making a film together. Aumont explains how Maria and Cocteau got along very well, "Maria and he belonged to the same race. Both of them moved easily between the confines of the real and the

unreal. Both of them were familiar with messages from the beyond, ghosts, and premonitions" (Aumont 1977:126). When the decision to make a film with Cocteau was final Montez and Aumont decided to move to France (Aumont 1977:128). In France, Cocteau promised to write *Orpheus* for them where Maria was to play Death. However, he pulled out in the last minute and gave the parts to other actors. Montez took the disappointment well and without bitterness and went on to pursue other projects and the couple moved to the calmer Suresnes. Here, Aumont was shaken by Montez's early and unexpected death, however he writes:

> Not only was she not afraid of death, she was familiar with it. She had a curiosity about the world beyond, a need to know what existed after life. Her bedside books were: *The Mystery of Eleusis*, *The Sanskrit Anthology*, *Summary of the Secret Doctrine*, and the *Book of Things Known and Hidden* (Aumont 1977:142).

Montez's interests in ghosts, premonitions, astrology, playing Death, and her ritualistic worship of St. Antonio are themes that informed Smith's practice.

Hollywood's orientalism

Montez's fictional characters in these highly melodramatic films often stand up for the suppressed and the outsiders, both as a gypsy in *Gypsy Wildcat* and as a royal in *Ali Baba*. In *Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves*, Montez portrays Lady Amara opposite John Hall's Ali Baba. When the Mongol tyrant Khan puts himself on the throne by force and suppresses the people, Amara helps Ali (who turns out to be the rightful caliph of Baghdad) and the other outsiders in the resistance movement to give a voice to the suppressed population and overthrow Khan. In *Arabian Nights* the plot is similar to *Ali Babas*. Montez performs the role of the poor Scheherazade once again opposite John Hall who once again plays the caliph of Baghdad, Haroun-Al-Baschid. Montez's Scheherazade chooses true love over power and wealth. Again, her character is a symbol of the rebellion against those who rule through suppression and torture. However, what is contradictory about these films and Montez's characters is that the films themselves are a testament to Hollywood's pastel-colored misconceptions or fantasies about the Orient and the exotic Other. According to the Palestinian literary theoretician and history professor Edward Said's book *Orientalism* (1979):

> Orientalism is a style of thought based upon an ontological and epistemological distinction made between "the Orient" and (most of the time) "the Occident." Thus a very large mass of writers, among whom are poets, novelists, philosophers, political theorists, economists, and imperial administrators, have accepted the basic distinction between East and West as the starting point for elaborate theories, epics, novels, social descriptions, and political accounts concerning the Orient, its people, customs, "mind," destiny, and so on (Said 1979:2-3).

According to Said, orientalism is the Occident's often patronizing assumptions about the East as for example exotic, romantic, and haunting. Said describes how these assumptions are old, dating back to antiquity, and have survived from generation to generation ever since (Said 1979:1). As Said explains: "Orientalism (…) is not an airy European fantasy about the Orient, but a created body of theory and practice in which, for many generations, there has been a considerable material investment" (Said 1979:7). Said notes how literature has upheld the idea of the civilized Occident and the uncivilized but nevertheless alluring East. In much literature and theory about the East, he finds "innumerable speculations on giants, Patagonians, savages, natives, and monsters supposedly residing to the far East" (Said 1979:117). Said explains, how orientalism refers to Occident ideas about the East, ideas that are not grounded in an Eastern reality (Said 1979:5). The Montez films represent this white orientalizing discourse described by Said, that *exoticize* the Other in a way that make these Hollywood productions give voice to and (re)produce a broader suppressive discursive racism. To some extent Montez herself participates in nurturing the prejudice conception of the Other by portraying these stereotypical characters and playing along with the stereotypical Latin American starlet image even though she represents a minority as a Latin American in Hollywood. However, in this chapter, I argue that Montez's performance is so bad and campy that she exposes Hollywood's imperialism. Smith's disincarnations of these Montez characters further contribute to reveal, exhibit, and mock Hollywood's orientalism and white imperialism.

3. Universal Pictures Company, Inc. Maria Montez in *Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves* (1944).

Smith's aesthetic, politics and position on Maria Montez

The beginning of a lifelong obsession

Montez is inscribed in the line of stars gone too soon. She died at age 39 on September 7, 1951, in Suresnes, France. Montez was bathing in her bathtub when she suffered a heart attack and drowned in the tub (Ragan 1985:141-42). In 1951, the 19-year-old Smith worked as an usher at the Orpheum Theatre in Chicago "where a series of commemorative screenings turned him onto his lifelong obsession with the raging and flaming star" (Johnson 2012:155). So, Montez and her perhaps greatest admirer, Smith, never got the chance to meet each other.

The superstar character: Maria Montez

In Smith's practice the wish to invoke Maria Montez expresses itself on several different levels. He appropriates and remediates both specific, fictional characters from a long line of Montez's commercial Hollywood B films from the 1940s and more generally the entire melodramatic Hollywood universe which Montez's films represent. Smith sheets himself with her. As Ronald

Tavel points out in the article "Maria Montez: Anima of an Antediluvian World" (1997), Smith revisits Montez in the people he loves, the performers he directs, and in his reenactments and photographs (Tavel 1997:91). According to Tavel, Smith saw Montez as the greatest superstar of all time. Smith worshiped her, literally. When he heard she had a small private chapel where she worshiped her patron San Antonio, he built an altar in his house where he worshiped her and prayed to her (Tavel 1997:96). As a tribute to Montez, Smith rebuilt the universe of Baghdad/Babylonia in his apartments, first in SoHo and then later on First Avenue. As Tavel describes it the entire project and the interior design of Smith's apartment "got its seed from Maria's *Raiders of the desert*, *Arabian Nights*, *Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves*, and *Tangier*" (Tavel 1997:96). On First Avenue, there was room enough for

> potted palms and succulents to allow him to squeeze-set them into an impenetrable Melanesian jungle tipping its hat to *Moonlight in Hawaii*, *South of Tahiti*, *White Savage*, *Cobra Woman*, and *La Donna del Corsaro*. An open Arabian niche cut into the wall that the bathroom shared with the (Persian) sitting room provided an unavoidable view from the latter into the sacred pool bath (Tavel 1997:96-97).

As such Smith surrounded himself with the Montez universe. Now, if we look at Montez from a technical acting point of view, her acting skills are far from perfect, on the contrary some would call her a very poor actress. So, what made her so fascinating to him? What made her a superstar? For Smith, it was Montez's "bad" acting, beauty and her portrayal of the outsiders of society that made her the ultimate superstar. Smith's idea of a superstar is far from the mainstream conception. What she mastered was an acting style that combined with her photogenic being, made her a star for Smith.

Cultic Diva worship

The performers, male as well as female, who pose in *Flaming Creatures*, can be seen as appropriations of Montez, thus blurring the lines between original and copy. In "The Perfect Queer Appositeness of Jack Smith" (2002) Jerry Tartaglia calls Smith's relation to Montez an obsession and explains how Smith was not alone:

> Her films do enjoy a cult following even today, especially among gay men (…) Queers whose appreciation of languid acting, feeble plots, veiled homoeroticism (Sabu was a

4. Universal Pictures Company, Inc. Maria Montez in *Cobra Woman* (1944).

> costar of three of the Montez films) and garish but fabulous sets and costumes mark them (…) as followers of the "cult of the cobra" (Tartaglia 2002:163).

Tartaglia also points out that the film industry did not hold her in the same high regard. To explain the common view on her, he quotes *Cobra Woman* director Robert Siodmak: "*Cobra Woman* was silly but fun. You know Maria Montez couldn't act from here to there, but she was a great personality, and she believed completely in her roles" (Tartaglia 2002:163). Tartaglia explains how the diva worship is widespread in queer circles with its adoration for stars such as Bette Davis, Marlene Dietrich, Maria Callas and Barbara Streisand. However Tartaglia points out, that Montez did not come close to ranking as high on the diva-list as, for example, Dietrich or Callas (Tartaglia 2002:164). Tartaglia refers to Hoberman's thoughts on the subject since Hoberman called Smith's notion of Montez as a diva 'campy' and noted that her films could be

seen as junk or trash (Tartaglia 2002:164). Smith did not deny this. On the contrary in, "The Perfect Filmic Appositeness of Maria Montez" (1997), Smith writes: "Trash is the material of creators (...) Trash is true of Maria Montez but so are jewels and so is wondrous refinement" (Smith 1997:26-27). Tartaglia explains that Smith, contrary to his underground filmmaker colleagues such as Jonas Mekas, Ken Jacobs, and Tony Conrad, favors the aesthetics of Hollywood, which he gave a campy twist (Tartaglia 2002:164).

The Beautiful Book: Superstars of Cinemaroc

As Lawrence Rinder points out in his article "Anywhere Out of the World: The Photography of Jack Smith" (1997), Smith's photographs seem to have drowned in his films and performances (Rinder 1997:149). However, they are an important link in the understanding of recurring themes, aesthetics, leitmotifs, and the development of the superstar character in Smith's practice. According to Rinder, Smith did not photograph professional actors and models but eccentric bohemians from the underground scenes, drag queens, hustlers, artists, and poor immigrants. In 1957, Smith opened Hyperbole Photography Studio, where he photographed these amateur performers (Rinder 1997:139). According to Rinder, Smith paid great attention to posing and directed his performers as if they were in a film scene. He staged utopian fantasies and exotic Middle Eastern scenarios and extended the everyday with the exotic in a campy, kitschy "trash" aesthetic (Rinder 1997:140-43). Smith's lack of means may have influenced this aesthetic but its opposition to Hollywood's aesthetic of excess is likely a more important key to understanding it. As a part of his obsession with Montez, Smith turned many of his performers into flaming, trashy, drag versions of Montez and called them superstars.

This photograph exhibits the cultic diva worship of Montez. Mario Montez (René Rivera) holds up an image of Maria Montez saying this is my role model and my idol (see image 5). Rivera took the name Mario Montez as a tribute to Maria, because, in my view, of her special status in the queer community. Encouraged by Smith, Mario Montez and several other of Smith's amateur performers dressed up like Maria Montez's characters or rather variations of Montez's characters. In the photograph, we see a photograph of a photograph. With hands showing off long polished fingernails, Mario holds a still photo from a Montez film: Maria Montez as the stereotypical Latin American character. Mario performs Maria as abject drag with a hair decoration made by trash, a wig, and heavy makeup. Mario's Maria shows how she inspires marginal underground amateur performers to perform the world in new ways. In 1962, Smith

published *The Beautiful Book*, which contains 19 black and white photos of different amateur performers and drag queens such as Francis Francine and Mario Montez (Rinder 1997:144).[13]

5. Mario Montez with an image of Maria Montez. © Jack Smith Archive Courtesy Jack Smith Papers, Fales Library and Special Collections, New York University and Gladstone Gallery, New York and Brussels.

[13] Francis Francine later on became famous as one of Warhol's superstars and played the drag-queen sheriff in Warhol's *Lonesome Cowboys*, 1968.

In 1962, Smith published *The Beautiful Book*, which contains 19 black and white photos of different amateur performers and drag queens such as Francis Francine and Mario Montez (Rinder 1997:144).[14] The book is filled with images of Smith's amateur performers. Smith called his amateur performers "The Superstars of the Cinemaroc," the name of his own imaginary film studio. Many of these performers later became superstars in Andy Warhol's Factory, among others Mario Montez. According to Lawrence Rinder:

> The term "superstar" as well as the very idea of Warhol's Factory – an avant-garde, Bohemian simulacrum of the traditional Hollywood studio, consisting of an ensemble of essentially replaceable stars and starlets presided over by a charismatic auteur – were appropriated by Warhol from Smith's Cinemaroc (Rinder 1997:144).

This belief is supported by Gary Morris in "Raging and Flaming: Jack Smith in Retrospect" (2000). He writes: "Warhol appropriated the concept of "superstar" and fake Hollywood studio from him [Smith]" (Morris 2000). Disincarnation is at play in *The Beautiful Book* as it mixes an Artaudian attack on the senses with its naked queer bodies, postdramatic multiple (drag) subject, and Brechtian breaks to the theatrical construction. As an example, Smith's drag characters punctuate classical femininity by wearing dresses and makeup while simultaneously exhibiting classical masculinity via masculine hairy legs and beards. The visual oriental elements inspired by Maria Montez anchor the images and create consistency à la the classical tradition.

Leitmotifs in *The Beautiful Book*

I will briefly sketch how disincarnation and some of Smith's leitmotifs such as the renegotiation of the harem, the use of flowers and veils, the strut of the neck gesture, and distorted images take off in *The Beautiful Book*. I will expand on several of these leitmotifs throughout the dissertation. *The Beautiful Book* presents Smith's utopian harem: a world with room for and inhabited by his flaming creatures. Like much of Smith's work, *The Beautiful Book* sparks a discussion about whether the photographs are pornography or art. As Susan Sontag argues in her defense of

[14] Francis Francine later on became famous as one of Warhol's superstars and played the drag-queen sheriff in Warhol's *Lonesome Cowboys*, 1968.

Flaming Creatures, Smith's work is not pornography. First, because it lacks the intention, purpose, and ability to arouse the audience sexually. Second, the depiction of naked bodies is too pathos-like and witty to be sexually arousing (Sontag 2001:227). I argue that the photographs point to an active materiality that is enigmatic, dark, and humorous. In one of the photographs, a voluptuous naked woman sits on a chair (see image 6). There is a veil in the background. Some of the veil falls down her shoulder. A man is sitting next to her. He is naked and wearing a theatrical half mask. She holds his penis. Smith captured them in an authentic moment where they are laughing as if somebody just told a funny joke. The atmosphere seems more friendly than sexual, the two look relaxed, and they seem comfortable in their bodies. Two unconventional superstars, they could be you and me, which makes us question the cut between superstars and "ordinary people." The authentic, natural moment captured between the two and the man wearing a theatrical half mask also make us question the cut between the real and the theatrical.

6

In another photograph, a veil covers a woman's face but her breasts are fully visible (see image 7). With theatrical hand gestures, she holds the veil in place. The lace veil disguises large parts of her face, which makes her face seem enigmatic and more intriguing than her breasts. Smith reverses traditional conventions about which body parts we cover up and produces new cuts. The veil over her face and the veil in the background create a veil upon veil effect that brings a tactility to the image. As portrayed in the other photograph, the flowers oftentimes act like a veil, which brings a tactility and materiality to the images (see image 8). I will return to an analysis of Smith's use of the veil in *Chapter 2*.

In several of the photographs, the performers strut or glide their necks back in proud but sweet surrender. The gesture makes the performers seem content in their bodies, relaxed and proud drags. I will return to the strut of the neck gesture in *Chapter 3*.

As Rinder also notes, the Austrian-born film director Josef von Sternberg (1894-1969) greatly influenced Smith (Rinder 1997:140). The trademark of Sternberg's films is their visual richness and photographic craftsmanship and his use of lighting and costumes.[15] Sternberg is especially known for his seven films starring Marlene Dietrich. Sternberg shaped her as an androgynous

7 & 8. *The Beautiful Book*, 1962 © Jack Smith Archive Courtesy Jack Smith Papers, Fales Library and Special Collections, New York University and Gladstone Gallery, New York and Brussels.

[15] Encyclopedia Britannica: Accessed May 9, 2017: http://global.britannica.com/biography/Josef-von-Sternberg

seductive beauty, which catapulted her to stardom. In the photos from *The Beautiful Book* you see a strong inspiration from Sternberg's films with Marlene Dietrich. As examples, Sternberg's flirt with drag strategies and the black and white images. In *Chapter 2* I will return to Sternberg and an analysis of Sternberg's influence on Smith's practice.

Performing politics

In his article "Jack Smith: Bagdada and Lobsterrealism" (1997), Hoberman underlines the importance of Maria Montez in Smith's entire life and practice, he writes: "More than a fetish or cult figure, Maria Montez provided Smith with an entire worldview" (Hoberman 1997:16). I will argue that Montez is a fetish figure for Smith but also, similar to Hoberman, more than a fetish figure. I agree with Hoberman's statement about Montez providing Smith with an entire worldview – but what kind of worldview did Montez install in Smith? Muñoz argues that this worldview was political and "worldmaking." As an example of disidentification in performance, Muñoz turns to the practice of Jack Smith. Muñoz' preface to *Disidentifications* is called "Jack's Plunger." In the preface Muñoz explains how he encountered Smith through Stefan Brecht's *Queer Theater* (1978). Stefan Brecht describes Smith's durational performances and introduces the term "queer theater". Muñoz stresses that Smith and his queer theater are central to the understanding of disidentification in performance. Inspired by Smith's belief that important acting transformed the world, not the actor, Muñoz calls Smith's work "worldmaking." Muñoz sees Smith as an artist who dissolved dominant codes and presented utopian possibilities by making new (queer) worlds and showed how the world should be: "He recycled schlock culture and remade it as a queer world" (Muñoz 1999:ix). According to Muñoz, when artists reenact or recycle material from the past, for example, in the way that Smith does it with Maria Montez and her films – it is not out of nostalgia but often with the intention of criticizing the present and envision the (utopian) future (Muñoz 1999:33-34).

At first, Muñoz was skeptical about the orientalizing parts of Smith's practice; however, upon further examination of Smith's practice, Muñoz realized that Smith's performances did not address the third world, but "worked through Hollywood's fantasies of the other" (Muñoz 1999:x). Smith used Montez and the harem culture to bring forth a different world that challenged a Western culture filled with "pasty normals". Muñoz interprets the normal in "pasty normals" as normativity and the pasty as the opposite of exotic (Muñoz 1999:xii). For Smith, exotic was an "antinormative option that resisted the overdetermination of pastiness" (Muñoz 1999:x). Thus, Muñoz suggests that the term "pasty normals" refers to white normativity.

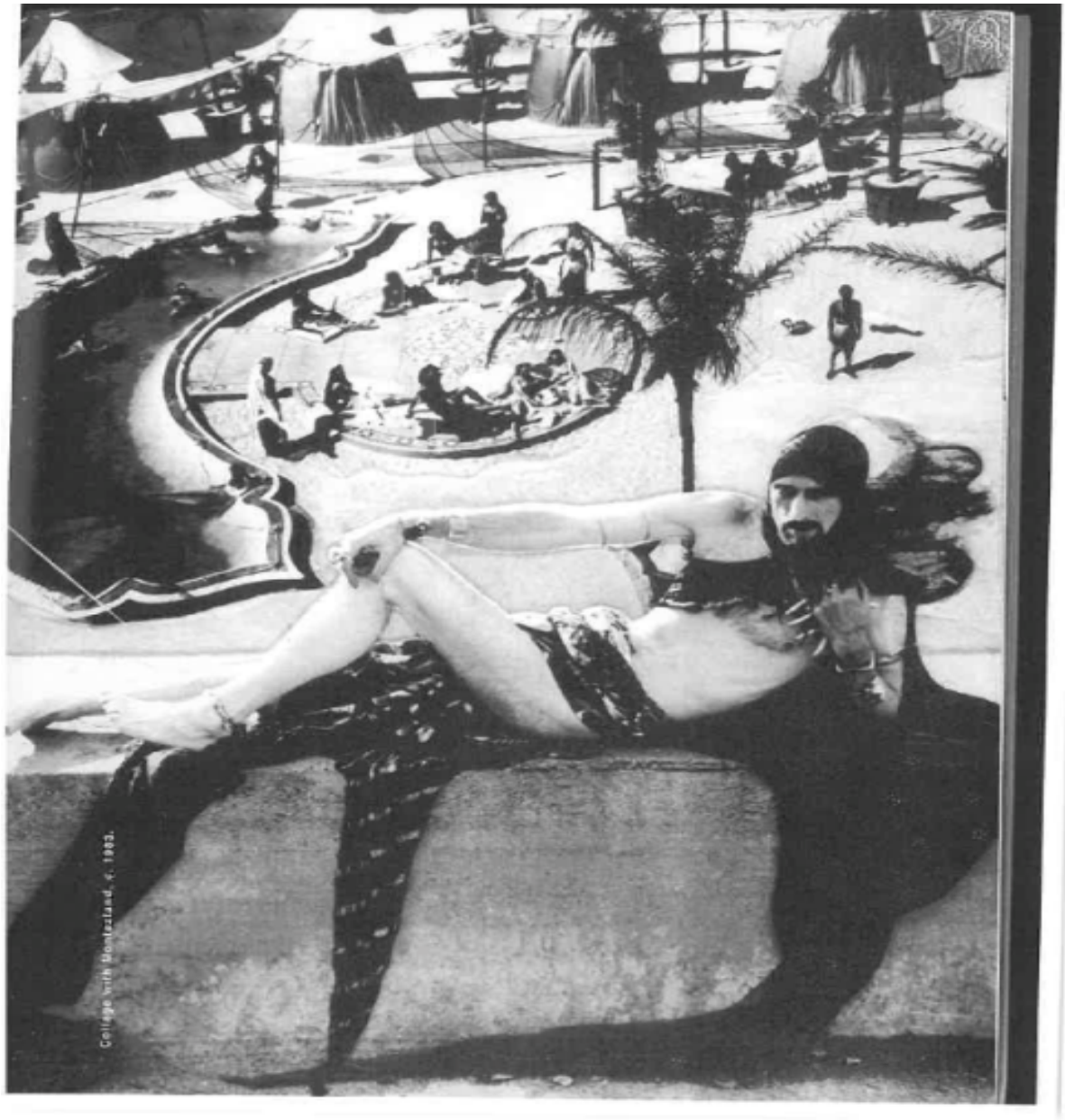
According to Muñoz, heteronormativity and white normativity informed each other as ideological formations for Smith (Muñoz 1999:xii). Smith does not identify with dominant culture, for example, Hollywood's Latin American stereotypes and fantasies about the exotic Other, nor does he counteridentify with it and try to break away from it. Instead, he works on and against the dominant ideology, disidentifying with it. How does he do this? According to Muñoz, Smith utilizes the dominant codes to criticize the dominant culture from within the dominant culture (Muñoz 1999:x). Muñoz explains:

> His performances of the spitfire and Scheherazade were inflicted with disidentificatory difference that helped toxic images expand and become much more than quaint racisms (…) the images Smith cited were imbued with a performativity that surpassed simple fetishization. Glitter transformed hackneyed orientalisms and tropical fantasies, making them rich antinormative treasure troves of queer possibility (Muñoz 1999:x).

As Muñoz suggests, Smith uses the material of dominant Hollywood culture and exaggerates it, transforms it into a queer universe to present a critique of Hollywood; he disidentifies with Hollywood.

As an example of this, Smith juxtaposes himself in Montez drag with an image from a Montez film set in the background in this *Collage with Montezland* (see image 9). This image is one out of many collages with Montezland made by Smith. Smith poses theatrically for the camera as a Caucasian bearded male in oriental drag. The Montez film set is filled with palm trees, sand, huts and people relaxing in the sun. This Smithian Montezland is Smith's version of Atlantis: a utopian fantasy Paradise. This is a world where no specific gender or religion is present but a dream world where everything is possible. As such, Smith recycles material from the past; however, it is not out of nostalgia but with the intention of criticizing the present and envision the (utopian) future: a world with room for flaming anti-normative creatures.

The love of the unfinished, focus on the process, and art in constant becoming is closely connected to Smith's resistance to Hollywood, commercialism and consumerism turning art into products. However, it is not as simple as this, because one of Smith's strategies was to appropriate material from the same Hollywood machine. Considering Smith's resistance toward commercialism, capitalism, and the Hollywood machine, it seems paradoxical that Smith appropriates material from the archives of mass media culture and cultivates Hollywood B films in different pop-art-like appropriation strategies. How are we to understand this seemingly paradoxical strategy?



9. *Collage with Montezland*. © Jack Smith Archive Courtesy Jack Smith Papers, Fales Library and Special Collections, New York University and Gladstone Gallery, New York and Brussels.

Smith uses the Hollywood universe and material from it to simultaneously bring forward a critique of the same universe. When Smith appropriates material and characters from Hollywood films, this material and these characters are being put into a different and new context. Given that the material is removed from its original context and moved into a new one, a division happens, since you take a step away from the original. This type of appropriation of material and characters corresponds with Jean Baudrillard's simulacrum theories presented in *Simulacra and Simulation* (1994) in relation to material being moved into other contexts again and again until you completely lose sight of the original and it no longer exists.

As Muñoz points out, Montez plays a large role in summoning Smith's politics because she shows him other ways of performing the world. As I mentioned earlier, Smith looks to her for socialistic answers in his fight on and against the material from Hollywood's archives. In *What's Underground About Marshmallows?* he says:

> The first thing you notice as you enter the round socialistic movie studio… the temple of the sacred brassiere of Maria Montez… is the open central courtyard where the public may arrive in the morning with their lunch to uh… to pay to watch movies being filmed in the sunlight (…) This is respect for the sun – also not uh, negation of nature that is the basis of the capitalistic so-called theater (…) The sets (…) are not destroyed after the production is finished… but changed as needed by being adapted and added to, and uh, also serving the needs of the audience. For example the multi-level Arab café set may continue to serve coffee even in the background of the filming or… in this way, or if it would produce a tweeky effect... Oh mother of God, without my glasses, already (...) Toward the round movie studio itself, all the, everyone acts in the spirit of cleanliness… a clean movie studio is a happy studio… (bell)… If I may say so: personally, I do not know how to make art on a dirty floor (Smith 140-141:1997).

The adaptation of set upon set until no original is left also corresponds to Baudrillard's simulacrum theories. I see this as Smith's way of criticizing the lack of originality in Hollywood films. Smith also humorously mocks the clean Hollywood studios, mass production, and the audience.

Camp

The term camp is central to the understanding of disincarnation in Smith's practice. Smith's films and their focus on phoniness, the low cultural, the corniness, the superabundance and the imagery are closely connected to camp. According to Susan Sontag's "Notes on 'Camp'"(2001), camp is characterized by a certain sensibility, which uncovers a love for the artificial, excessive and everything going beyond what is regarded proper or customary. Camp is about surfaces, the theatrical and glamorous (Sontag 2001:275) as well as the reversal of sexual characteristics (Sontag 2001:279). Stefan Brecht's descriptions of Smith's adaptation of Henrik Ibsens *Ghosts* in the performance *The Secret of Rented Island* (1976-77) reveal campy elements such as the exaggerated oriental elements, the poor, failed acting, the theatrical gestures, the queer drag

characters, the glitter everywhere, pink spotlight, the green chaise longue with the lion's feet, and the plastic palm tree (Brecht 1978:159-162), and the Doris Day music (Brecht 1978:170). For Smith and Sontag's camp characters, the goal is not good acting. Sontag describes it this way: "Camp is the glorification of "character" (...) Garbo's incompetence (at least lack of depth) as an actress enhances her beauty" (Sontag 2001:285-86). There is a celebration of the intensity and authenticity of the "failed" or amateur-like actress. Tendencies that are picked up by and cultivated in today's reality-shows. After a screening of *Cobra Woman*, Smith said the following about Montez's acting and the way she came across on screen: "Those reviewers always spoke about her bad acting. Yet, you cannot rip your eyes off her! What she's doing is what acting is substituting for!" (Smith in Leffingwell 1997:96). According to Smith, Montez strikes, in her uncovering of Hollywood's clichés, a far truer nerve than "skillfull" actors who only live up to the Hollywood conventions. Smith sees honesty and authenticity in Montez's "bad" acting. She was so fantastic, so beautiful to him, that it stopped him following the plot of the film. In Smith's eyes, Montez's aura could be recorded and registered on film, which made her a star to Smith. However, Montez was more than just an invitation to an escape from the reality of the Second World War. She portrayed the outsider within mainstream culture, the outsider as the exotic Other. Montez's portrayal was to a large extent built on Western prejudice about the East. What is interesting here is the fact that Montez's portrayal of the exotic Other is so campy, so immoderately indulgent, that it is very hard to take seriously, which means that Hollywood through Montez happens to exhibit a broad American culture as imperialistic. Smith challenges the heteronormative regime by cultivating his minority position excessively through the development of an immoderately indulgent campy, exotic cross-dressing and transvestitism. As such, Smith uses Montez (who to him is a superstar) and her fictional characters, as a critical gesture in a camp and drag perspective through his strategic exploitation of Hollywood in a subversive and homosexual character formation. The strategy corresponds in interesting ways with Muñoz' disidentification theory. Muñoz describes disidentification as a strategy, where a subject belonging to a minority group reactivates an object, appropriates the power of the idol, and transforms this power and uses it for his own artistic purposes. Muñoz points out that Smith's work with exotic characters from the catalog of Hollywood B films was a way of working through Hollywood's fantasies about the third world understood as the cultural Other (Muñoz 1999:x). With his Montez-appropriated drag character, Smith utilized these fetish-fantasies about the Other to destabilize a world built on a white heteronormative culture. Smith created cracks in Hollywood with its own means: the ultra-superficial. According to Muñoz,

Montez, with her incomplete and campy acting, helped the early performance artists to perform the world in a different manner.

Turning to the world of Smith's films, all the films I have seen are examples of campy collage-worlds.[16] Smith juxtaposes beauty, humor and horror, glamour and trash in the sense that they are filled with *tableau vivants* of drag vampires who want to eat young naked men, a penis in a champagne glass, footage from some Hollywood musical, roses, fox and skull masks, a huge pastel-colored cardboard cake, scary orgies, feathers, flowers, glitter, pastel-colored Araby settings with soap opera-like scenes, ruined buildings and trash. In *I Was a Male Yvonne de Carlo* (black/white film 1967-70), Smith films the street at night in New York. The images are dark, grainy, unfocused. Air and steam is coming out of the ground; car lights pierce through the fog. Suddenly these drag creatures emerge from the steamy smoke, looking amazingly beautiful and mysterious. Smith cuts to his apartment filled with oriental looking drag creatures with lipstick and huge masks filled with feathers. Smith appears in a two-piece leopard outfit with rings on his fingers. Trashy mannequin-like dolls are piled up behind him. An orange crab and a lot of glitter are presented on cardboard. Smith poses on a chaise longue, touching his face, gesturing theatrically and diva-like with his hands. Someone gives him a photo of himself that he signs. I imagine that this is his disincarnation of Yvonne de Carlo. The campy gestures outlined above destabilize heteronormativity and are examples of how Smith uses camp to perform the world in new ways. Sontag argues that "the Camp sensibility is disengaged, depoliticized – or at least apolitical" (Sontag 2001:277). I disagree with Sontag and her statement has been debated since, for example, in Ann Pellegrini's essay "After Sontag: Future Notes on Camp" (2007). I argue that that the political implications of Smith's camp and practice in general are far-reaching.

The politics of Smith's practice

Muñoz notes that Stefan Brecht has his doubts about the political implications of queer theater. Brecht argues that it depends too much on the energy of the artist, which for Brecht made it most likely that queer theater would only have the implication of "good-humored comedy" (Muñoz 1999:x). According to Rinder, "though no political activist, he [Smith] insisted that art be an antidote to the spiritually and aesthetically deadening effects of American capitalist society" (Rinder 1997:139). Muñoz (as well as myself) disagrees with Brecht and Rinder on this issue

[16] *Flaming Creatures* (1963), *Normal Love* (1963), *Scotch Tape* (1959), *I Was a Male Yvonne de Carlo* (1967-70), *Jungle Island* (1967), *Respectable Creatures* (1950-1966), and *No President* (1967-70).

and argues that Smith's campy practice is much more than "good-humored comedy," quite the contrary, due to the anti-normative critique of the work.
Brecht himself uncovers Smith's use of personal and political metaphors: the lobster is a metaphor for the spineless system, Uncle Fishhook is a metaphor for people who exploit artists, and, for Smith, renting something refers to paying for time and not a place or a building, which is absurd for Smith (Brecht 1978:160). I argue that these metaphors are highly political. Brecht recalls how Smith criticized Jonas Mekas, referring to him as Uncle Fishhook in *The Secret of Rented Island*. He also explains how the metaphors are mixed with Smith's thoughts on the price of humping:

> Someone has to pay for all that humping, to pay for the lobster, lucky landlord of Baghdad, those beliefs which are put into the world by all the uncle fishhooks, …", in a lame, lost, weepy voice speaks of married people's envy of "what the queer goes out at night and does" they "only dream of it" (Brecht 1978:166).

Again, this quote is highly political. Smith combines a critique of capitalism, art exploiters and heteronormativity. Muñoz describes Smith's performance of politics as Marxist materialist. Smith's term "landlordism" refers to his resistance against private property that he considered capitalist, Smith compared owners of private property to lobsters hungry for money. Smith expresses this view in the performance *Irrational Landlordism of Baghdad* (Muñoz 1999:x). Muñoz describes how Smith's performance combined camp and crazy glamor with political themes and agendas such as wage exploitation and questions of class. Muñoz writes:

> This performance is particularly illustrative of Smith's materialist aesthetic philosophy. Smith insisted on art that was "escapist, stunning, glamorous and NATURALISTIC". "NATURALISTIC" for Smith meant that it served a politically pedagogical role, that provided the spectator the material to resist "the Capitalism of Lobsterland," and instead disidentify with that world and perform a new one (Muñoz 1999:xi).

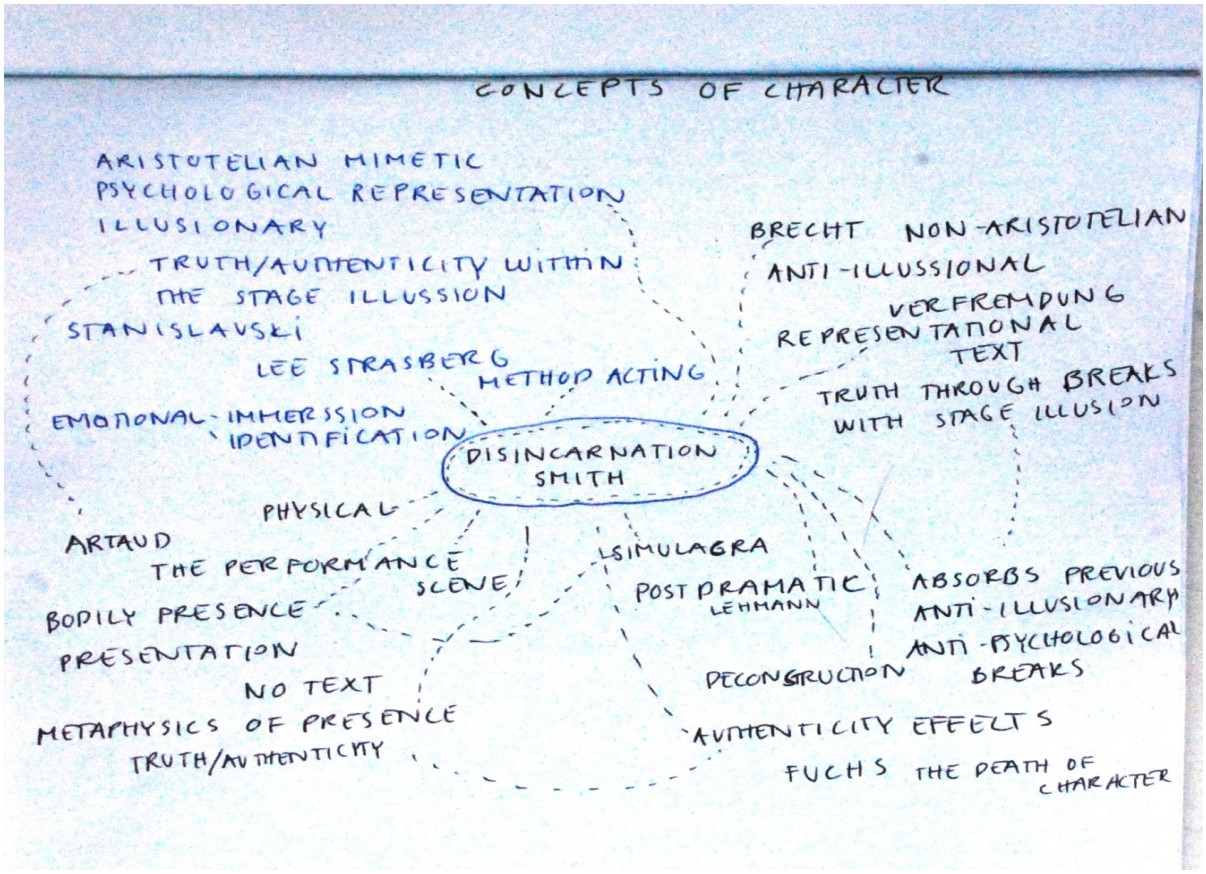
Smith encourages the audience to resist consumerism and capitalism. Smith cross-identifies with Montez regarding race and gender because he saw Montez's bad acting as transforming and bringing forth a social critique since it presented another way of performing the world (Muñoz 1999:xi). Muñoz refers to a performance by Cuban-born performance artist Carmelita Tropicana (a.k.a Alina Troyano) who believes that performance art alters our perception of the world. The

performance, in which she performs her memory of a Smith performance, is her homage to Smith. Carmelita Tropicana brings a plunger on stage and asks the audience what it is and when someone shouts, "A plunger," she explains how the person is mistaken. She does so by referring to a performance by Smith that she witnessed with seven others in a small basement. Smith poured gasoline on the floor and lit it with a match. The flames were so high that they thought they were going to burn, but just in time, Smith brings out a plunger and puts out the fire. So, Tropicana argues that Smith thus transformed the plunger into an art object (Muñoz 1999:xiii). Muñoz describes how we can detect Smith in Tropicana's practice through "her over-the-top "exoticism," her deep investment in gaudy and toxic stereotypes of the Latina, her red feather boas, and the occasional splash of glitter that might punctuate her performances" (Muñoz 1999:xiv). Muñoz concludes the preface by arguing that queer performance from Smith and onwards is about transformation (Muñoz 1999:xiv). As another example of disidentification in performance, Muñoz refers to the U.S Supreme Court's decision in *Bowers v. Hardwick* that banned gay and lesbian rights to privacy by criminalizing homosexual sex, because how else than stepping into their bedroom will anybody find out if homosexuals have sex? In Cuban and Puerto Rican-American artist Marga Gomez' performance *Marga Gomez is Pretty, Witty and Gay* (1992), Gomez disidentifies with the Supreme Courts decision as a lesbian of color by letting the performance take place in her bedroom and giving a monolog from her bed. Muñoz points out how the bedroom of a queer person is thus brought into the sphere of dominant heteronormative culture. Gomez presents a scenario or a look into a world that minority subjects, in this case queers of color, can identify with and as such attain social agency (Muñoz 1999:1). This is an example of how, for Muñoz, the term disidentification describes survival strategies of the hybrid self/minority subject in a phobic and heteronormative culture where the white heterosexual male is the ideal citizen (Muñoz 1999:4). Muñoz argues that the identity-making process is situated between the colliding essentialist and constructivist understandings of self. The collision informs a reconstruction of identity. Muñoz uses the term identities-in-difference to describe identities that break away from the dominant public such as people of color and queers of color (Muñoz 1999:6-7). This is also a way of arguing that processes of identification are always in motion/in flux. Muñoz stresses that it is crucial to subject formations and the formation of a self to have something and someone with which to identify (Muñoz 1999:7). I interpret this as Muñoz suggesting that, for example, role models in the shape of film stars, football players, musicians, politicians, and so forth are important to the formation of a self and that it poses a problem if no people of color and no queers of color are represented among these stars because then there are no role models with whom people of color and queers of color can identify within

dominant culture. Muñoz criticizes how most queer theory analyzes white lesbians and gay men and leaves out questions of race (Muñoz 1999:10). For Muñoz, artists such as Smith and Gomez offer survival strategies for the hybrid self by presenting idols, role models, and (utopian) worlds with which queers and people of color can identify and from which they can form a self.
With simultaneous fascination and disapproval Smith destabilizes Hollywood's stereotypical presentation of the exotic Other and converts this figure into his flaming drag creatures. These drag creatures hold a great ethical-political potential because they exhibit alternative ways of performing the world and thereby new ethics.

Disincarnation: a performative practice

Muñoz' disidentification goes a long way in exploring the relation between subject and identity construction, performance, and ideology. As Muñoz emphasizes about disidentification, disincarnation is not "an apolitical middle ground (…) its agenda is clearly indebted to antiassimilationist thought" (Muñoz 1999:18). However, what differentiates and separates disincarnation from disidentification are certain questions about the body and becoming. Muñoz uses the terminology from semiotics whereas disincarnation focuses on the body.
Disincarnation's contribution (to disidentification) is that it unpacks a mode of embodying related to fandom, obsession, and becoming as well as furthering the understanding of character construction in performance theater.
Aristotle's classical coherent character, Bertolt Brecht's drama that breaks away from the illusionary into the political/critical/reflective, Artaud's thoughts on bodily presence, and Fuchs' multiple subject are all groundbreaking and thrilling character concepts. However, what interests me in this dissertation are the intervals between these character concepts. Broadly applied, disincarnation consists of a lively traffic between various elements from different concepts of character, in other words character as assemblage. However, disincarnation is not a concept of character as much as it is a performative practice. Disincarnation consists of layers of performativity. Before getting into an analysis of the intervals between the four concepts of character and an exploration of the layers of performativity, I present a mapping of four central concepts of character representation (See figure 10). Let me make this clear: The purpose of this mapping is analytical clarity in my examination of the traffic between them and not any attempt to present absolute concepts: (1) the classical, naturalist/psychological illusionary concept, (2) the non-Aristotelian, Brechtian anti-illusionary concept, (3) the performative, Artaudian, anti-representational concept, (4) the postdramatic deconstructivist concept.



10. The four concepts of character.

I have mapped the classical concept in blue since elements from the classical tradition such as emotional identification are underexposed in contemporary performance theater. However, as my project will expose, emotional identification is an important component to the contemporary performance theater puzzle. First, however, I will introduce the four concepts of character and how the development in character representation is closely connected to the development in subject formation. The overall picture shows that subject and character formation to some extent go hand in hand in a development from a rationalist organic character and subject (Aristotle, Descartes) to a multiple character and subject (Nietzsche).[17] I start by introducing different subject formations from a philosophical perspective. I go on to introduce character formations through theater theory by introducing the different character formations in relation to questions about presence.

[17] There are exceptions – Classism, Shakespeare, baroque.

Subject- and character formations

Subject positions in philosophy: the Cartesian subject

The Cartesian subject refers to René Descartes' subject understanding. During the Enlightenment, philosopher René Descartes built the foundation of Modernity and inspired modern Western thinking. With his book *Discourse on the Method* (first published in 1637), Descartes' theories of the subject were anchored in his belief in the saying "Cogito ergo sum" which translates into "I think, therefore I am" favoring mind over matter in terms of our perception of the world. During the Enlightenment authenticity was connected to the mind and a God-given reason and rationality. In *Volatile Bodies* (1994), Grosz notes how the "uncontrollable body" has been subordinated to the mind by Cartesian thinkers in Western philosophy and feminist theory. This has resulted in a Western logocentrism characterized by misogyny where the woman and the body are related to passion and the man and the mind related to reason (Grosz 1994:3). Grosz explains how this separation of mind and body dates back to Aristotle and Plato and is closely connected to Descartes who valued consciousness and the mind above corporeality and connected mind and knowledge. The body is passive for Descartes who did not believe in the interaction of mind and body (Grosz 1994:6-7).

19th Century: Crisis in the Cartesian subject

In *Nomadic Subjects – Embodiment and Sexual Difference in Contemporary Feminist Theory* (1994), Rosi Braidotti notes how there have been different notions about what constitutes subjectivity throughout history. Braidotti argues that the different poststructuralist schools i. e. The French critical theory school – Deleuze, Derrida, Foucault – and the German critical theory school – Habermas have something in common: They all question the ideas and the Cartesian subject of the Enlightenment (Braidotti 1994:96). Braidotti describes how the questioning of the Cartesian subject was fueled by a crisis in Western values that arose at the end of the 19th century. Thinkers such as Friedrich Nietzsche and Sigmund Freud questioned Western logocentrism, the rationalist regime and the universal, rationalist subject of knowledge. This also produces a shift from authenticity being connected to God-given reason to authenticity being perceived as and connected to a more individual personal experience. Braidotti unfolds how ever since Freud and Nietzsche the idea of "difference" has been central to European philosophy. This brings about a new notion that adds to the crisis of Modernity, the concept that subjectivity no longer concurs with consciousness (Braidotti 1994:149). This created a breaking up of the rationalist foundation of classical subjectivity and the marriage between rationalism and

masculinity. This breaking up lead to an opening in the (re)definition of female subjectivity. According to Braidotti, after the Second World War, globalization and multiculturalism intensified the crisis in fixed identities and Western values such as normative rationality (Braidotti 1994:224).

Grosz explains that Merleau-Ponty breaks away from Cartesian dualisms and speaks up for the body and the interrelatedness of mind and body. In Merleau-Ponty's opinion, "the mind is always embodied;" we cannot stand back or separate ourselves from the body and its experiences (Grosz 1994:86). Merleau-Ponty believes that perception and experience are midway between mind and body. He is interested in this space in between the no-man's-land (Grosz 1994:94). Grosz's goal is to question the centrality of the mind via a reconfiguration of the body (Grosz 1994:vii). This does not mean that Grosz does not pay any attention to the subject's psyche, but she forefronts corporeality because she finds that philosophers in theories of subjectivity have neglected corporeality. For Grosz, sexuality is interesting since it cannot be contained; it "seeps across boundaries into areas that are apparently not its own" (Grosz 1994:viii). This is true for the body at large, bodies extend or stretch whatever comes along and tries to contain them (Grosz 1994:Xi).

Subject positions in post-modernism: The nomadic subject

Braidotti and the poststructuralist movement argue that the different postmodern subject positions break away from the universal subject and represent a rebellion against essentialism. Braidotti explains that, if one wants to understand the postmodern subject "one needs to emphasize a vision of the thinking, knowing subject as not one but rather as being split over and over again in a rainbow of yet uncoded and ever so beautiful possibilities" (Braidotti 1994:158). For Braidotti the subject has many different colors, shapes and sides. Braidotti presents her subject position or "figuration" for her theories about subjectivity that she calls the nomadic subject (Braidotti 1994:4). The nomadic subject is always in the making, in process, in becoming, moving around between different stages, positions, and identities. These movements have the potential to bring about change and contribute to the creation of new images. For Braidotti, nomadism is a way of dis-identifying with the phallogocentric subject (Braidotti 1994:29). However, the idea of a nomad does not reject creating a stable base for identity. Braidotti's point is simply that the consciousness of the nomad lies in the refusal of a permanent identity (Braidotti 1994:33). The nomad travels from one identity to the next so we cannot speak of a permanent stable identity but rather a transgressive identity.

Character positions: Presence and authenticity in the four concepts of character

The overall picture shows that character representation reflects the developments in subject understandings outlined above. Fuchs' account of the history of character refers to a movement from the domination of an organic character built on consistency – a reflection of the Cartesian subject – the classical character is characterized by consistency and reason in inner/emotional construction and development (Aristotle) and unity (Hegel) culminating in naturalism/psychological realism (Ibsen) – to inconsistency in character representation through a multiple or nomadic subject on stage starting with symbolism (Fuchs 1996:21-35). Now, I will take a closer look at the developments in character representation by introducing the four concepts of characters constructed for my analytical purposes: the classical, the Brechtian, the Artaudian, and the postdramatic.

When I discussed Smith's practice with Mary Magdalene Serra at the Film-Makers' Cooperative she asked me if I had read Walter Benjamin's "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction" (1936). When I confirmed that I had, she went on to explain: "What he writes about authenticity and aura – that's what Jack had! You can quote me on that" (Serra 2016). Stefan Brecht states something similar when he describes Smith's performance in *The Secret of Rented Island* (1976-77). He writes: "He made no attempt to perform the character. His was the human voice, his presence the human presence. He was the hero" (Brecht 1978:160). What interests me is what kind of authenticity, aura, and human presence is at stake and how notions about presence speak to the bodily self as deconstructed. This is the reason I will present the four concepts of character in relation to their negotiation of presence and authenticity. Overall, I argue that, despite their differences, the four concepts of character negotiate ideals about truth, essence, emotional identification, authenticity, origination, and presence. However the means to reach these ideals differ widely.

The classical concept of character

The classical tradition led by Aristotle is built on Aristotelian essentialism. In *The Metaphysics* (1998), Aristotle defines essence as that without which the object would stop being what it is or die. In relation to the essence of being human, Aristotle describes a human as a rational animal in *The Nicomachean Ethics* (2004). According to Aristotle, humans would stop being what they are without reason. According to Aristotle's *Poetics* (1961), characters are defined by their actions,

logical character development, and he underlines that the characters should be represented with consistency (Aristotle 1961, XV:81-82). For Aristotle, the unity of plot is also an ideal. A tragedy should be a whole with a beginning, middle, and an end (Aristotle 1961 VII:65). Aristotle presents four elements to aspire to in terms of character representation. The characters must be good, proper, true to life, and (their behavior must be) consistent. The characters must act a certain way out of necessity or probability, just as one scene should follow the next by necessity and probability (Aristotle 1961 XV:81-82).

Aristotle was one of Plato's students. In *The Republic* (2004), Plato divides the world into the sensuous world of objects and the abstract world of the Good. In the sensuous world there are only copies of the world of the Good. Plato's mimesis critique is that theater with its poetic mimesis then is a copy of a copy, a debased copy of the Good, an illusion of reality, that calls out emotional response that corrupts our minds (Plato 2004: Book 10:595a-608b). Aristotle did not agree with his teacher on this. Aristotle argues that imitation is a deep instinct that teaches us about the world, and learning is a lively pleasure. Thus, Aristotle tried to rehabilitate theater by giving a larger role to the human experience and emotional humanness – and less focus on abstract forms. According to Aristotle, the audience would get a clearer sense of human living by engaging in painful events in the safe space of the theater through a coherent whole of representation or the reproductive "as if" mode of poetry (Aristotle 1961 IV:55-56). Optimally, the audience should reach catharsis at the end of the play. Aristotle did not write much about catharsis. What he did explain was "Tragedy, (…) through pity and fear effecting the proper purgation of these emotions" (Aristotle 1961 VI:61). Thus, purgation or catharsis is related to cleansing through the emotions pity and fear, in particular, those of the audience (Aristotle 1961 VI:61). According to the Merriam-Webster dictionary, catharsis comes from the Greek word *kathairein*, which means to cleanse or purge. It is also a medical term related to purging the body of undesirable material, of, for example, the bowels. As such, catharsis means purgation, not just semiotic or figuratively, but also in the body. [18]

Konstantin Stanislavski and Lee Strasberg are inspired by Aristotle and add influences from modern psychology to their acting theories. In *An Actor Prepares* (1948), Stanislavski describes his magic "if" technique where the actor generates the emotions of the character by thinking: What if it was I in the situation of the character, how would I feel and react (Stanislavski 1948:64-65)? Stanislavski also teaches his actors to draw on their personal emotional memory to

[18] *Catharsis*. In: Merriam-Webster dictionary. Accessed May 11, 2017: https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/catharsis

regenerate the feelings of the character (Stanislavski 1948:193). The actor should be able to make the inner emotions and feelings known to the audience by expressing them on the outside. The actor composes the soul of the character from his or her emotions and "carries it over on the stage" (Stanislavski 1948:191).

In his book *A Dream of Passion: The Development of the Method* (1987), Strasberg unfolds how the foundation of method acting is his interpretation of Stanislavski's emotional memory. Method actors fully immerse themselves emotionally into the character in an effort to "become" the character. The understanding of authenticity and truth within classical character representation is connected to consistency in character development and representation through a full immersion of the character within an enclosed stage illusion.[19]

19th Century: Crisis in the classical character

According to Fuchs, Friedrich Nietzsche not only provoked changes in the rationalist regime in general as described by Braidotti but also provoked changes in character representation. Nietzsche was interested in the dramatic form. However, Nietzsche breaks away from Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel by arguing that individual subjectivity was something blocking any relation to universal psychological powers. As Fuchs describes it, "Nietzsche has nothing but contempt for the representation of individuated dramatic character (…) 'character representation' (...) is above all the fatal flaw of the 'death leap into the bourgeois drama'" (Fuchs 1996:28). Nietzsche unfolds his theories of the death of the subject in *The Birth of Tragedy* (1872) and according to Fuchs, Nietzsche's contempt for individuated dramatic character representation foreshadows modern and postmodern movements in theater, among others "the death of the subject" in the symbolist movement (Fuchs 1996:29). Fuchs argues that the death of the subject is connected to the death of character. Fuchs' statement and title *The Death of Character* does not imply that there are no characters on stage from symbolism and onward. She refers to the death of classical dramatic character representation. She argues that "the dissolution of autonomous character" (Fuchs 1996:31) falls into three processes in the modern period: the allegorical led by Strindberg, the critical with Bertolt Brecht as its frontrunner, and the theatrical represented by Pirandello (Fuchs 1996:31-32).[20] Strindberg breaks away from dramatic character

[19] There are exceptions, for example in the ancient Greek dramas the audience should be able to identify with the characters on stage not necessarily the actors and no fourth wall existed.

[20] Fuchs describes Pirandello's theatrical movement as being able to "hold two or more planes of reality in ambiguous suspension" (Fuchs 1996:33) and has therefore become "a favored dramatic mode to express the relative and multiple nature of self-identity" (Fuchs 1996:33) in plays such as *Six Characters in Search of an Author* where

by dissolving it in *A Dream Play* (1902). In his foreword to *A Dream Play* he wrote that a dream play has

> the disconnected but apparently logical form of a dream. Anything can happen, everything is possible and probable. Time and space do not exist . . . The characters are split, double, and multiply; they evaporate, crystallize, scatter and converge. But a single consciousness holds sway over them all – that of the dreamer (Strindberg 1955:193).

Strindberg and symbolism paves the way for the dissolution of classical character representation.

The Brechtian concept of character

The Brechtian concept of character, as Fuchs also mentions, is presented in Bertolt Brecht's *Schriften zum Theater* (1957) where Brecht presented his anti-naturalistic, anti-Aristotelian acting techniques. John Willet gathers many of Brecht's theories in the book *Brecht on Theater* (2015). Willet based his selection on *Schriften zum Theater* (1957). In "Short Organon for the Theater," Brecht describes how both the audience and the actor should not be able to identify completely with the character but rather question the actions of the character critically. When it comes to acting, the actor must show the character as opposed to a full transformation into the character (Brecht 2015:243). In other words, Brecht wanted his actors to enact a split between actor and character on stage through alienation techniques. In "On Chinese Theater, *Verfremdung* and *Gestus*," Brecht describes how Chinese theater inspired him to use alienation effects (*Verfremdungseffekts*). With alienation effects, Brecht teaches his actors to break the stage illusion by dissolving the fourth wall between audience and spectator by speaking directly to the audience, showing the character ('s emotions) from the outside in, stepping in and out of character and thereby making it clear to the audience that the actor knows he/she is being looked at with the purpose of making the audience reflect intellectually and critically (Brecht 2015:149-51). As such, inconsistent, anti-illusionary and anti-psychological character representation, characterize Brecht's theater. In "The Modern Theater is the Epic Theater" (2008), Brecht presents a non-Aristotelian, anti-essentialist paradigm where a curved storyline replaces linear development: the montage (Brecht 2008:171-173). The montage is also an alienation effect in the sense that it made sure the audience knew they were in a theater through breaks with

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six characters seek out a writer to finish their story – and one name is as good as any other for these characters (Fuchs 1996:34).

Aristotelian scenes following each other with necessity and probability, for example, by letting songs separate scenes. Authenticity in Brecht's world is reached by constantly breaking the illusion of character to exhibit the true reality of theater: that it is a fictive illusion. However (text) representation is still the foundation of Brecht's theater (cf. Hans-Thies Lehmann 2006:68-69).

The Artaudian concept of character

Both Bertolt Brecht and Antonin Artaud break with the realism and psychology connected to conventional classical theater, but their ideas about the optimal theater were different. While Brecht appealed primarily to the audience's intellect. Artaud appealed primarily to the senses of the audience. Artaud creates a new concept of character by abandoning representation of a dramatic text and instead focusing on a metaphysics of presence as bodily presence. The presentation of bodies replaces mimetic character representation. Artaud's understanding of authenticity and truth is connected to bodily presence and cannot be united with representational imitation. As Marvin Carlson describes it in *Performance: A Critical Introduction* (1996), for Artaud, the essence of theater has been corrupted by speech, words, logic, narrative – the essence being the body, i. e. physical (not psychic) essence – without which theater would cease to exist or be what it is. This points toward the ideal of physical essentialism in performance art (Carlson 1996:141). Sarah Wood notes in *Derrida's 'Writing and Difference.' A readers guide* (2009) that two different understandings of presence or metaphysics of presence are presented in the theories of Edmund Husserl and Artaud. Artaud seeks presence without repetition through the elimination of language, and Husserl seeks pure presence through "'the living present, self-presence of transcendental life' in its ideality and repeatability" (Wood 2009:96). In Husserl's concept of absolute presence, there is no discrepancy between thought and action. Antonin Artaud transfers Husserl's concept of absolute presence to the body. For Artaud, the physical body is understood as an essentialist, stable category representing pure presence and essence.

In *The Theater and its Double* (1958), Artaud explains that he wants the audience to experience his "Theater of Cruelty" through the senses and that he aims to produce; "a theater that wakes us up: nerves and heart" (Artaud 1958:84). Artaud wishes to do this by attacking the senses and emotions of the audience through expressive and intense gesture, music, and stylized movement to impact the audience emotionally. Artaud argues that "the images of poetry in the theater are a spiritual force that begins its trajectory in the senses and does without reality altogether" (Artaud

1958:25). Artaud wanted to rescue the theater from the psychology with gesture and expression (Artaud 1958:90).

Fuchs traces Artaud's influence on theater and performance art from the 1960s. She refers to Artaud's analogy between the artist and the dying person. According to Artaud, the artist must signal through the flames while burning up, since it is in the nearness of death the artist is most alive and present. Fuchs explains how, with this image, Artaud compacted "the entire aspiration to presence in the theater, and by extension proposed in it also, under the cover of an end to dualism, yet another 'solution' to the long struggle in Western metaphysics between body and mind, action and reflection" (Fuchs 1996:69). Artaud wishes to eliminate language and cultural codes from the stage and instead focus on the body, the voice, movement and the Dionysian elements of life. Fuchs argues that Artaud inspired many in the 1960s and 1970s including Jerzy Grotowski, Peter Brook, Julian Beck and Judith Malina's The Living Theater, Joseph Chaikin, André Gregory and Richard Schechner's Performance Group. They carried on the torch of Artaud and sought out this Artaudian bodily presence (Fuchs 1996:69). These artists did not believe that the text was the way to theatrical presence. On the contrary, it stood in the way of it.

Artaud, performance, and the performative turn

Artaud wanted text abolished from the theater in order to achieve true human presence on stage. Artaud inspired the performance art scene and the so-called performative turn. Investigations of presence and presentation on stage are characteristic of the performative turn. In her article "Performance Art and Ritual: Bodies in Performance" (1996), Erika Fischer-Lichte elaborates on the performative turn by pointing toward J. L. Austin's speech act theory and explains how it played a large role in summoning the performative turn (Fischer-Lichte 1997:**31**). In *How to Do Things With Words* (1976), Austin distinguishes between a constative and performative utterance. A constative utterance can describe something while performative utterances can perform acts: They do not describe the world; they change it (Austin 1976:2-6). One of Austin's favorite examples is "I name this ship the Queen Elizabeth" (Austin 1976:5). The ship is given a name with the utterance. Another Austin example is the "I do" as consent to marry someone. This is another example of when saying something simultaneously is doing something. When you say, "I do", you enter into matrimony (Austin 1976:5). The performative utterances' focus on doing and action had a great impact on performance art in the sense that performance art sees art as active action, presentation, and doing and not as representation. The performative turn also concerns the audience who often are positioned as active participants in performances. In

"Performance/Teater: bidrag til begrebsforvirringen" published in *Performancepositioner: mellem billedteater og performancekunst* (2001), Henrik Vestergaard Pedersen points to the German performance theorist Elizabeth Jappe who describes the difference between a performance artist and a theater actor in the following way: "In theater, roles are being played and in performance people present themselves (or aspects of themselves)" (Jappe in Pedersen 2001:119-120, my translation).[21] Thus, the performative turn in performance art brings forward a focus on presentation instead of representation, the body and the here and now event. As performance theorist Peggy Phelan puts it in *Unmarked: The Politics of Performance* (1993): "Performance's only life is in the present. Performance cannot be saved, recorded, documented, or otherwise participate in the circulation of representations: Once it does so, it becomes something other than performance" (Phelan 1993:146). Phelan claims that performance escapes representations by taking place here and now. The performances of performance artists are not based on rehearsal, representation, and repetition but presentation. This means that the performers put themselves at risk in an unstable position, not fully in control, which brings about a more attentive state and a state of heightened presence. However the paradoxical nature of the Phelan quote has been noted and discussed by critics: On one hand performance art is regarded as more authentic and present than theater and its representations. On the other hand, performance is fleeting and thereby marked by absence. This means that already Phelan's most notorious insistence on absolute presence in performance is marked by the absence and deferral indentified by deconstruction. It is this paradox that Cull tries to resolve/reconcile with her Deleuzian concept of differential presence.

The postdramatic concept of character and bodily presence

While the classical tradition is the dominant voice today and throughout theater history in mainstream theater, the dissolution of the classical subject and character continues throughout the 20th century in the avant-garde, the neo-avant-garde, and performance theater. From Fuchs 2008 review of Lehmann's *Postdramatic Theatre* (2006), it is clear that Fuchs and Lehmann have different approaches to their theater and performance research. As mentioned earlier, Fuchs and Lehmann disagree on whether to call it postmodern or postdramatic. In addition to this, Fuchs uses a more literary, philosophical/poststructuralist approach whereas Lehmann's

[21] Pedersen, title in English: "Performance/Theater: Contribution to the Confusion of Concepts". In: *Performance Positions: between the Theater of Images and Performance Art*, 2001.

approach is closer to theater aesthetics. Nevertheless, they both argue that the classical character as a psychologically unified character and text representation are deconstructed in and absent from performance theater and postdramatic theater.

Fuchs' overall argument is that a multiple, scattered character pointing in many different directions has replaced the classical organic and consistent character, thus deconstructing and dissolving the classical character, in performance theater. In "Presence and Revenge of Writing: Rethinking Theater After Derrida" (1985), Fuchs notes that Western logocentrism cannot fully understand performance theater and its presentation of unstable subjects and meanings (Fuchs 1985:165-166). Theater semiotics is stuck in Western logocentrism. Not everything can be reduced to signs, for example, the audience. Fuchs calls the aura or presence (of the performer) an "effect of theater" that has existed as long as theater itself but became an "absolute value" to aspire to in the 1960-70s with inspiration from Artaud (Fuchs 1985:163). Jacques Derrida challenges the Artaudian metaphysics of presence and thereby "the absolute value of the 'Presence of the Actor'" (Fuchs 1985:164).[22] Derrida argues that absolute presence is impossible. Fuchs interpretation of Derrida includes seeing Artaud as an extreme version of the traditional theatrical presence Artaud wants to escape. In *The Death of Character* (1996) Fuchs argues that when it comes to questions about presence, character, and authenticity, Jacques Derrida's deconstruction of the speech vs. writing dichotomy has produced a:

> shift in which the proliferation of reproducible culture had made the attribution of "presence" suspect. Theater is similarly de-theologizing itself, doubting speech, voice, character, self, presence. We are looking at the end of drama and the emerging of a post-metaphysical theater (Fuchs 1996:90).

Fuchs argues that once stable categories and truths connected to theater and performance are being called into question. Fuchs goes on to examine how and claims that theater and performance in the 1970s-80s are marked by absence rather than presence as an effect of the deconstructivist shift. According to Fuchs, another branch of American experimental postmodern theater artists such as Robert Wilson, Richard Foreman, The Wooster Group, Stuart Sherman and Lee Breuer emerged that – contrary to the earlier group of Artaud-inspired artists – began to cultivate an aesthetic of absence. Contrary to Artaud, they did not wish to banish the text but to rework the status of the text. Fuchs argues that they belong to the realm of "performance theater"

[22] Cf. Derrida's deconstruction of Artaud's metaphysics of presence in "The theater of cruelty and the closure of representation" (1978).

(Fuchs 1996:79).[23] Fuchs explains that performance theater itself stages its own inability to be the bearer of presence. Fuchs unfolds how performance theater draws upon elements from dramatic theater, for example, in using dramatic texts, but it also draws upon performance art by being constantly aware of itself as performance and by resisting re-presentation. Performance theater is also characterized for Fuchs by a certain director or group of performers "of such visual and stylistic originality that the text seems not to be reimaginable even where it is presumably restageable" (Fuchs 1996:79-80). Fuchs claims that in performance theater character is fragmented and dissolved through various means such as a new literalization and representation of the failure of presence: The actors were sometimes considered more present through their absence and various interruptions of theatrical presence. As an example, Lee Breuer presented the actors as ghostly reflections in his version of Beckett's *Come and Go* (1975). Robert Wilson allowed his actors to come and go from the performance, napping and eating in his piece from 1973 *The Life and Times of Joseph Stalin* (Fuchs 1996:71). Fuchs also notes how performance theater artists were the originators of what she calls a new "literalization or textualization of the theater" (Fuchs 1996:74). She describes how Foreman, Wilson, and Sherman presented the texts themselves and the activity of writing such as in Sherman's *Hamlet* where he was very literal by having his actors carry around "copies of Shakespeare's text while performing various gestures (including sitting and reading the play)" (Fuchs 1996:80). Fuchs describes how Foreman's productions played with notation in a very literal sense such as decorating the stage with phrases and letters (Fuchs 1996:81). Fuchs argues, in yet another double logic, that Foreman seeks language in order to escape language. The double logic consists in seeking absence to create liveliness (escape language) by letting his characters miss the mark or being off the mark in whatever they say, no matter how they utilize the language. In this way,

> in the place where one transcends language, there is finally the right mark: we cannot imagine the very state we long for; the handle to the door is always on the other side. This is the dilemma opened by the always necessary deferral of the aspiration to presence, including divine presence, and its reflection in theatrical presence (Fuchs 1996:84-85).

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[23] The earlier group from the 1960s-1970s include Jerzy Grotowski, Peter Brook, Julian Beck and Judith Malina's The Living Theater, Joseph Chaikin, André Gregory and Richard Schechner's Performance Group who believes that the text stood in the way of theatrical presence and carried on the torch of Artaud and sought out this Artaudian bodily presence (Fuchs 1996:69).

Fuchs points toward the discussion about Plato's theories on presence, origination and mimesis and how these phenomena's are in "double trouble" in theater. As another example of the literalization of text, Fuchs mentions Elizabeth LeCompte and The Wooster Group's *Nayatt School* (1978) where the group stages the mechanics of reading. The performers sat at a long table in front of microphones and read sections of T.S. Eliot's *The Cocktail Party*. In *L.S.D. Just the High Point*s (1984), the performers sat at a similar table reading at random from books of different beat writers. Fuchs calls this chance experiment a variation on presence and concludes that it is a fine example of how the group dissolves the metaphysics of presence (Fuchs 1996:85-86). The authenticity of the physical lies in the physical illusionary breaks, but the problem is that it is the Artaudian. They use different metaphysics to open up each other, which is why it is hard to decide whether simulacra or physical presence is at play, Artaudian presence but also pure representation punctuated by and with the body. Fuchs argues that The Wooster Group specializes in reconstructing classic texts and in all their work there is a distancing from inward, psychological character representation through technological means such as "speech-distancing devices – phones, tape recorders, and the usual microphones" (Fuchs 1996:85). I will add that in their newer work post-1996, plasma screens also contribute to the distancing and literal splitting of the characters on screen. Returning to Fuchs, she notes how groups such as The Wooster Group create cybernetic dramas that press ideas about "presence" in new metaphysical directions (Fuchs 1996:91). Fuchs also describes how the Wooster performers distance themselves from psychological realism: "The roles were not so much played as announced; lines were spoken in an exaggerated manner, as if in quotation marks" (Fuchs 1996:85). Fuchs refers to Julian Beck and argues that this textuality and these reconfigurations of reading and writing in performance theater are made possible

> when the "space" of speech in theater, with all its character(istic) associations of authenticity, origination, presence, has already begun to contract. Just as Derrida's work undermining speech appears at a historical moment when metaphysics are in retreat, so these theaters of reading and writing appear when, as Julian Beck declared, "The Theater of Character is over" (Beck in *The Life of the Theater* 1972 in Fuchs 1996:89).

Beck's and Fuchs' statements correspond. I do not agree entirely with Beck's statements or conclusions nor with Fuchs' Derrida-based interpretation. Fuchs' interpretation of Derrida corresponds with Lehmann's in *Postdramatic Theater*; however, as Hans-Thies Lehmann points out, there are other movements at play in postdramatic theater. I argue that alongside the

dissolution of character there is a movement pointing in a different direction, where elements from classical drama and character representation are re-circulated in new ways in postdramatic theater. The dramatic theater does not continue here, but elements from it are reconfigured. I argue that there is a contradiction in Fuchs' theories because, on the one hand, Fuchs argues that performance theater deconstructs character, text, drama, linear narratives, and presence but, on the other hand, she holds on to the body as absolute presence through, for example, the aversion of metaphysics. This is where I detect a missing link: I argue that the bodily self is also deconstructed in performance, body art, and performance theater. My interpretation of Fuchs is that her aesthetics of absence is another way of speaking about what is really at stake, namely bodily presence through absence and failure. Fuchs points indirectly to this when she argues that the performers sometimes seem more present through their absence and interruptions of theatrical presence and when she refers to a double logic in seeking absence to create liveliness: that is presence. When she refers to a double logic in seeking absence to create liveliness, I also interpret this liveliness as presence. One could argue that it is a tautological conception.

Hans-Thies Lehmann and bodily presence

The artists and groups from Fuchs' postmodern theater are included in what Lehmann calls postdramatic theater. As Lehmann implies with the title *Postdramatic Theater* postdramatic refers to theater-making after around 1960 where the dramatic text is no longer at the center of theater productions. Lehmann defines postdramatic theater as the de-hierarchization of theatrical elements: lighting, set design, text, performers, and so forth are equally important (Lehmann 2006:86) According to Lehmann, a newer theatrical element, convincingly introduced by The Wooster Group, is widespread use of modern media technology on stage (Lehmann 2006:168) exhibiting meta-fictional mechanisms as to how illusions of truth are produced and constructed, for example, on television where images are often manipulated to some extent.

Lehmann's postdramatic theater also holds on to bodily presence as an ideal. For Lehmann postdramatic theater is post post-Bertolt Brecht because it abandons classical drama and text representation for presentation and bodily presence. As Lehmann writes, "In postdramatic theater, breath, rhytm and the present actuality of the body's visceral presence take precedence over the logos" (Lehmann 2006:145). Lehmann also mentions physicality as a central sign in postdramatic theater and explains how the cultivation of the auratic "presence" of the actor's body and often the presence of the deviant body inflicted with illness or deformation is widespread (Lehmann 2006:95).

Following Lehmann authenticity and truth in postdramatic theater lays in breaks as concurrent attempts to define presence. Postdramatic theater absorbs all anti-illusionary breaks from previous concepts classical elements. Plot-driven dramatic text and whole unified characters have fragmented into ”a new kind of presence of the ‘performers’ (into which the ’actors’ have mutated) and establishes a multifarious theater landscape beyond forms focused on drama” (Lehmann 2006:57). Notions of authenticity are re-negotiated in postdramatic subgenres such as reality theater, documentary theater, and participatory theater through a widespread use of authenticity effects on stage.

Postdramatic theater and authenticity effects

In the article “Authenticity and Fictionality in Postdramatic Theatre” (2009) Luule Epner explores how different authenticity effects are used in postdramatic theater such as recorded words of real people in the verbatim-theater, authentic fact-based documents and text material in documentary theater, or a “mode of acting” described as self-expression in favor of role-playing (Epner 2009:292). This spurs on a larger exploration of the relationship between representation and immediate presence (Epner 2009:292). Epner emphasizes that “insofar as we have to do with events framed as theater performance and repeated on stage from evening to evening, we can neither eliminate representation completely nor reach absolute authenticity” (Epner 2009:292). This is what prompts Epner to refer to authenticity effects. Smith’s performances do not take place on a conventional stage or in a theater building but in his home. Making the audience partake in the performances blurs the gap between performer and audience and his performances were not repeated on stage from evening to evening. Here, Smith’s practice corresponds to Epner’s point about forwarding an authenticity effect using a “real” space (Epner 2009:298). Other ways to do this which correspond with Smith’s failure aesthetic is to make mistakes and break the illusion on purpose, which contributes to an ““aesthetics of indecision” (Ästhetik der Unentscheidbarkeit), if we use the notion of Hans-Thies Lehmann…” (Epner 2009:298-99). Epner concludes that it was not the goal of René Pollesch and other post-dramatic artists to reveal the “true truth” but to combine fiction and the authentic (Epner 2009:301).

The material and discursive merge on stage

According to among others the French philosopher Jacques Rancière and his book *The Emancipated Spectator* (2009), two movements or passed-on traditions attempting to deconstruct the dramatic Aristotelian character within the (neo)avant-garde and modernism were battling

each other in the 20th Century: An Artaudian and a Brechtian (Rancière 2009:4). In her book *Deleuze and the Cinemas of Performance: Powers of Affection* (2008), Elena del Río points out how the Artaudian movement has been characterized as affective bodily theater and the Brechtian as reflective discursive theater, that is, two movements pointing in completely opposite directions. However, del Río notes that, among others Elizabeth Wright and Rainer Nägele have warned against determining Artaud and Brecht as representing the traditional poles of, respectively, emotion and reason (del Río 2008:75).

> At first sight, the Brechtian and Artaudian perspectives appear to put forth incompatible theories of the performing body. While the body in Brecht functions as intelligible sign in a system of socioeconomic and political relations, and requires the aid of rationality to provide a lucid understanding of these relations the Artaudian body finds in its own prelinguistic, irrational force the only means to wage its struggle against ideological automatization. But, while differences between them are, at a conceptual level, too fundamental to be ignored, major principles of both theories seem to coexist at the practical level of actual performances (…) I do not wish to reduce Fassbinder's complex films to a binary model whereby scenes may neatly fall into the dichotomy of Brechtian static representations/tableaux versus Artaudian aggressive actions. Rather, I want to suggest that the passage between form and force, hence the interaction between Brechtian and Artaudian models, is crucial in mapping the affective-performative intensity that traverses the body at all times in these films (Río 2008:75-76).

In theater theory Peter Zazzali argues along the lines of del Río and her Fassbinder analysis that the theater company The Living Theater, formed in 1947, already combined the two models. In "An Artaudian and Brechtian Analysis of The Living Theatre's *The Brig*: A Study of Contradictory Theories in Practice" (2008), Zazzali argues that The Living Theater with *The Brig* (1963) was the first to combine the two practices in their work. According to Zazzali, Artaudian traits include pushing audience members and performers "to visceral, emotional, and corporeal extremes. According to Artaud, every gesture, sound, mimicry, movement, set piece, and staging choice should be carefully designed to transform the theatrical space into a site of chaos and crisis" (Zazzali 2008:6). According to Zazzali, *The Brig* was simultaneously a Brechtian political montage "comprised of epic scenes" (Zazzali 2008:5). It combines the Artaudian and Brechtian practice by being "as visceral as it was didactic, as distancing as it could be cathartic" (Zazzali 2008:4). Similar to Zazzali, Wright, and Nägele, the disincarnation

practice expands our understanding of the interaction between character concepts by extending the interaction to include also the classical and the postdramatic concepts of character. Perhaps we cannot talk about the classical, Artaudian, Brechtian, and postdramatic as opposite movements but rather as different aspects of one Western theater and performance tradition. The classical aspects include coherent and unified plot and character representation within a stage illusion. The Artaudian aspects include a metaphysics of presence as bodily presence. The Brechtian includes alienation effects, and the postdramatic aspects include the deconstructed subject. With disincarnation, I can correct the radicalization of Brecht's theater as pure alienation and postdramatic theater as pure deconstruction or absence. I also examine how voice, body, character, and the emotional also characterize postdramatic theater and Brecht's theater in the sense that the audiences were allowed to identify emotionally with his characters. How else would they find the nerve to criticize and rebel after the show? In this way, disincarnation will provide a more complex understanding of the avant-garde.

Smith's acting manifestos: converging character concepts

Opposites attract: Emotional identification in Smith's Reptilian Acting Technique (R.A.T)

> The R.A.T. is an extension of the common sense approach of Lee Strasberg; it would seem to be saying let's *not* pretend (Smith 1997:165).

In the following, I analyze how disincarnation shines through in Smith's practice, first by examining how the four concepts of character or acting techniques converge in Smith's work. I start with Smith's words and ideas about acting printed in what I view as his three acting manifestos "The perfect filmic appositeness of Maria Montez," "Belated appreciation of V.S," and "Actavistic, action packed, action acting of pfa – *Hamlet and the 1001 Psychological Jingoleanisms of Prehistoric Landlordism of Rima-Puu*".[24] As the introductory quotation suggests, Smith defines his approach to acting in opposition to Lee Strasberg's method acting.

[24] To prepare the audience for his interpretation of Shakespeare's *Hamlet* in the performance *Hamlet in the Rented World* (1972), Smith wrote a press release with the title *Actavistic, action packed, action acting of pfa - Hamlet and the 1001 Psychological Jingoleanisms of Prehistoric Landlordism of Rima-Puu* (1997). Smith opened the press release with the statement "We do have revolutionary ideas about acting and we are testing them on the world's most abused play" (Smith 1997:165). The "we" refers to the Reptilian Theatrical Company of which Smith was the artistic director.

Nevertheless, I argue that Smith's disincarnation practice is much more than a simple reversal of classical Strasbergian acting techniques. I claim that, alongside his critical approach to Strasberg, Smith negotiates ideals about presence, consistency, emotional identification, catharsis, and authenticity from classical acting. However, Smith uses very different means (such as Brechtian and postdramatic anti-illusionary breaks) to reach the classical ideals. For Smith, classical ideals such as emotional release, dramatic action, and presence are achieved through "bad" acting, failures, confounding devices, and visual phenomena as opposed to classical text and character representation. Smith's practice drives back and forth between Artaudian, Brechtian, postdramatic, and classical elements in a reworking of all of them: Smith places the (queer) body and the visual elements at the center and values anti-illusionary presentation above representation, which links him to a non-verbal Artaudian performance tradition. However, unlike Artaud, Smith does (re)present text on stage. Smith's practice is also filled with meta-theatrical self-referential structures. In this sense, Smith seeks out the space in between classical text representation, Artaudian bodily presence, and Brechtian alienation techniques.

In the following section, I discuss how Smith negotiates ideals from the classical tradition. As an example a classical terminology and classical ideals shine through when Smith writes in his Acting Manifesto essay "The Perfect Filmic Appositeness of Maria Montez," "What is it that we want from film? (...) an emotional release" (Smith 1997:34), and "something genuine" (Smith 1997:34). I argue that "emotional release" is a direct reference to Aristotelian catharsis. A terminology similar to the classical tradition also shines through in "Belated Appreciation of V.S" when Smith describes true movies as opposed to "untrue movies" (Smith 1997:43). In "The Perfect Filmic Appositeness of Maria Montez," Smith expects films to evoke "real belief," and "images evoke feelings" (Smith 1997:33). As such, Smith subscribes to classical ideals and values but he finds these values in very different places than those of the classical tradition. From the early 1950s to his death in 1989, Smith develops his own anti-representational acting style Reptilian Acting Technique (R.A.T.). Montez's acting "skills" led him to rethink the rules, techniques, and strategies of traditionally skilled acting. As suggested in the introductory quote, Smith did not believe that a performer should pretend to be or represent someone else least of all a character in a script. In "Actavistic, Action Packed, Action Acting of PFA," Smith explains in a clear break from both the classical and the Brechtian tradition that "memorized speech is possibly the least dramatic thing that can happen on the stage or anywhere" (Smith 1997:165). Here Smith indirectly states that dramatic action – a classical attribute – is one of his ideals. In *Chapter 2*, I will analyze how Smith negotiates the ideal of dramatic action from the classical tradition and what constitutes dramatic action for Smith.

I argue that Smith plays with the concept of emotional identification and immersion known from the classical tradition. As Stanislavski wants it, based on memories from their lives, the performers should be able to identify emotionally, feel and thus relive what the characters feels and distribute it to the audience. I argue that Smith does something similar but still not quite. Smith's performances are often based on his personal memories and experience. Some of these experiences happen to coincide with those of Montez, which made it easy for Smith to identify with her. Not long after her rise to fame in Hollywood, de Carlo was replacing Montez and it was difficult for Montez to be taken seriously as an actress. Smith was familiar with this feeling of being abjected or cast out of the industry both as a homosexual and as an artist whose work was censured – *Flaming Creatures* was censored and banned for obscenity. As Johnson notes, Smith identified with Montez as "a drag on the industry" (Johnson 2012:13). He identified with Montez as cast out or abject. Smith felt she was misunderstood by the industry, and he saw her performances as authentic. As I explained earlier, Smith identified with her authentic performance and wished to appropriate this into his acting style to expose Hollywood's racism. Contrary to Stanislavski-schooled actors Smith did not have to use the magic if technique to bring out emotional identification with Montez. Smith identified with Montez instantaneously and idolized her for that same reason, as Johnson puts it:

> Smith is unusual among artists for the way in which he used his personal admiration for Montez (as fetish) and compensatory demeaning of Yvonne de Carlo (as nemesis) as enduring spurs to creativity. It demonstrates how autobiographical concerns influenced his practice, especially in writing and performance. As such, he cultivated a perverse failure to distinguish between himself and his work (Johnson 2012:151).

Smith's Montez-disincarnation is based on his personal identification with her. Smith's performance of her is not based on the relation between a character in a script and an actor using Stanislavski's techniques to represent that character. This is an example of how he fails to distinguish between his work and himself. Smith's performance of Montez is based on a relation of desire and longing for his lost idol. Let me explain: In *Glorious Catastrophe* (2012) Dominic Johnson uses the psychoanalytical term *jouissance* to further a formulation and understanding of "pleasure and disgust, desire and death in Smiths work" (Johnson 2012:90).[25] Following

[25] *Jouissance* and abjection are similar concepts; however, they refer to different processes in the "subject". *Jouissance*, the French word for *enjoyment*, is connected to excessive pleasure, whereas abjection serves and is connected to the creation of the subject. *Jouissance* leads to dissolution of the subject, which the abject also

Johnson's psychoanalytical path, incarnation and the spiritual in Smith's practice are separated from religious connotations and connected to Kristeva's abjection theories and questions of identity and identity-making processes in negotiation with death and loss. Again, Smith's relation to Montez is a relation of desire and longing for his lost idol. The relation between fan and idol characterizes Smith's emotional identification with Montez: a relation of desire. Keeping in mind that Smith was a homosexual, Montez was not an object of Smith's sexual male desire, he desired her as a model for his subversive drag characters. In this sense Smith speak against the general perception of the female film stars, who according to Laura Mulvey's essay "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema" (1999), were subjected to the male gaze.

Smith's practice points in many different directions simultaneously. However, everything in his oeuvre seems to gather around his ongoing desire for Montez, toward his fascination and incorporation of her, toward securing or fixating her, which brings cohesion and consistency to his practice and reminds me of Strasbergian character representation and its emotional and material immersion and incarnation – classical attributes.

Julia Kristeva approaches abjection by pointing out that within abjection lives the "dark revolts of being" (Kristeva 1982:1). According to Kristeva, abjection holds the power to revolt against identity, life, systems, law and order because it refers to unclean bodily reactions such as vomit, horror, an open wound, decay, and ultimately death and the corpse. All humans will have to endure these bodily reactions. We cannot escape them, which means that I have to put up with the abject since "The abject has only one quality of the object – that of being opposed to I" (Kristeva 1982:1), and as such, the abject constantly challenges its master (Kristeva 1982:2). In relation to subject-making processes, the abject poses a threat to the subject because it refers to unclean or impure bodily reactions such as vomit, decay, and ultimately death. With her concept of abjection closely related to bodily processes, Kristeva expands the understanding of the body in psychoanalysis. According to Kristeva, the child must separate itself from the mother to become a subject. The ego must break away from the mother (the Other) to become an ego. In this way the mother becomes the abject for the child, the waste, that which the child drops (Kristeva 1982:12-13). According to Kristeva, "The abject is the violence of mourning for an "object" that has always already been lost" (Kristeva 1982:15) such as the mother for the child. Now, Montez can be seen as the "object" that has always already been lost to Smith. However, the child breaks away from the mother whereas Smith re-performs the relation to the body of the mother and incorporates Montez (the Other/the mother). Johnson emphasizes Smith's fascination

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threatens to do, as Johnson writes: "*Jouissance* refers to the self-shattering that occurs in the subject" (Johnson 2012:91).

with invoking dead celebrities (Johnson 2012:41) such as Montez and de Carlo, calling his investment in Montez as 'disastrous icon' almost necrophilic (Johnson 2012:30). I call Smith's investment in or incorporation of or identification with Montez abject. Instead of separating himself from the abject, Smith embraces it. To what end? Is it a self-destructive maneuver or self-defense? Also, if abjection represents a state of being cast out, is it still abjection if the abjected is not cast out but incorporated and taken in as an object of identification? The answers to these questions depend on your take on abjection. Smith examines the power and energy of the abject. The terror we feel at the sight of a corpse is natural and necessary to our survival and subject formation, but finding ways to cope with the abject does not necessarily make it any less abject. There are ways to interact with abjection that are not based on rejection and segregation, but where it is still abject. I will argue that Smith's practice is an example of this. Smith humorously exaggerates the abject and thereby punctuates the stigma associated with the abject. I argue that Smith's practice in connection to abjection may be illuminated by Halperin's understanding of gay subjectivity in his essay *What Do Gay Men Want? An Essay on Sex, Risk and Subjectivity* (2009). Halperin examines new forms of gay subjectivity outside thoughts about either the stigma of sickness, on the one hand, and aggressive defense of homosexuality, on the other hand (Halperin 2009:69). Halperin notes that Kristeva explores abjection in relation to psychoanalysis but also in relation to, for example, religion and literature. Halperin describes Kristeva's abjection as "an extreme form of disidentification" (Halperin 2009:69), a crisis in the self where one disidentifies with parts integral to the self such as bodily fluids. As Halperin notes, Kristeva does not discuss homosexuality, however Halperin concludes that "Gay men after all are "abjected," in Kristeva's sense, by straight society" (Halperin 2009:70) and connected to the abnormal, perverted, and social shame (Halperin 2009:70). Halperin breaks away from a psychoanalytical approach to the abject (as that which pulverizes the subject) and examines abjection as a product of social interaction (Halperin 2009:71). Here, Halperin subscribes to Jean Genet (*The Thief's Journal*, 1948) and Marcel Jouhandeau's (*De l'abjection*, 1939) notions of abjection as a "social concept rather than a psychological one" (Halperin 2009:72). Halperin subscribes to Genet's and Jouhandeau's more positive productive attitude to abjection arguing that abjection has the power to free gay men from the dominating power structures suppressing and shaming homosexuals and grant gay men a new subjectivity. Halperin argues that

> abjection achieves a spiritual release from it [domination] by derealizing its humiliating effects – by depriving domination of its ability to demean the subject and, thus, robbing it

> of a portion of its reality. As a result, social persecution loses some of its crushing power and changes its meaning (hatred is transformed into love). Only once domination has been defied through being resignified can it be transformed into a vehicle for attaining beatitude (Halperin 2009:79).

By embracing the social humiliation connected to homosexuality, the humiliation loses some of its power. The embrace dissolves the humiliation or at least transforms it into something else. The final chapter of Marcel Jouhandeau's *De l'abjection*, "Praise of Abjection," inspires this attitude. Jouhandeau unfolds how he takes pleasure in the hostile reactions to his homosexuality. Jouhandeau explains how he discovers "happiness in everything that isolates me, 'abjects' me" (Jouhandeau p. 164, in Halperin 2009:73). Why does it make him happy? Because, as Genet argues, abjection has the possibility to break out of ordinary life and "transcend the social" (Halperin 2009:73), thereby "transcending social humiliation" (Halperin 2009:74). Genet does not see the abject as threatening in terms of subject-making processes but as glorifying abjection as a site of resistance to social domination and persecution of homosexuals. Embracing abjection and thereby transforming or resignifying abjection becomes a survival strategy or life-affirming social strategy for the abjected. I argue that Smith resignifies abjection as a source of desire and identification. Smith identifies with and embraces the abject and thereby defies humiliation and punctuates its powers. By embracing and cultivating the abject, Smith opens up to interim bodily scenarios where the abject such as death and decay does not oppose ravishing beauty. As an example, Smith's essay "The Memoirs of Maria Montez or Wait for Me at the Bottom of the Pool" (1997) is set on a film set with a makeup lady and several dead and half dead actors and actresses. Smith describes the dead Montez with flesh falling from her face: "The dust settled. O finally! Maria Montez was propped up beside the pool, which reflected her ravishing beauty. A chunk fell off her face showing the grey under her rouge" (Smith 1997:37). Smith underlines that no matter the stage of decay or rot it does not alter the beauty of Montez. Halperin and Smith critically extend Kristeva's theories on abjection to a place of identification: For Halperin and for Smith abjection is not a site of disidentification but a site of identification. Smith identifies with the abject for example in the shape of the dead B movie star Maria Montez.

To expand on Smith's integration of Montez, I turn to Mark Franko's "The Dancing Gaze Across Cultures: Kazuo Ohno's Admiring La Argentina" (2013). Franko examines Butoh dancer Kazuo Ohno's relationship with his female muse, flamenco dancer La Argentina. Franko describes how Ohno did not dance her (La Argentina) but moreover "his gaze upon her" (Franko 2013:174) in remembrance of her. I will say the same goes for Smith. He does not perform

Montez; he performs his gaze upon Montez (as abject, surface, failed actress). Franko also notes how the incorporation of the Other can produce oneself and argues that Ohno's consumption of La Argentina made his career/artistic expression thus producing Ohno himself:

> One could say that his consumption of La Argentina made the Kazuo Ohno phenomenon possible, that he consumed her to produce himself. To "admire" Argentina is to do tribute to her, to eulogize her, to mourn her, to incorporate her as a melancholic, to reanimate her as a spirit, to devour her as a necrophiliac, yes, but also to ingest her as cannibal and appropriate her strength (Franko 2013:187-88).

Similarly, Smith must incorporate and consume Montez to produce himself. Smith desired Montez as surface and 'bad' actress and wished to approach the surface and Montez's behavior. What function did she serve to him? She has a function for him through her production of mistakes and authenticity. Smith used her to become something third. He created a new material montage for his Marxists material political purposes. Did Smith wish to become camp and political and not Montez? Maybe, but to Smith Montez exhibited the behavior that could lead to revolution; Smith identified with this behavior emotionally, politically, and beyond.

I do not see Smith as Montez incarnate, but argue that Smith plays with traces, imprints, and markings of incarnation by appropriating Montez's external characteristics: hair, makeup, clothes, jewelry, gestures, and posing. The essence of Montez to Smith was her beauty, style, gesture, and gracefulness combined with "authentic" acting. Putting it simply, disincarnation refers to Smith's incarnation of Montez through the appropriation of her external characteristics (Strasberg method acting) and his simultaneous exhibition of the illusionary or constructed nature of this incarnation, for example, by exhibiting a male trait – the beard that makes his incarnation impure (Brecht) and turns it into disincarnation. It follows that Smith's Montez-disincarnation is not limited to a pure incarnation (of a dead star) that is then deconstructed. An elaboration of the term will show that disincarnation embraces a more complex position within character representation.

I have located elements from the classical tradition in Smith's practice: Firstly, Smith identifies emotionally with Montez as "a drag on the industry" as an abject outcast. Her pure, authentic acting that exhibits the false Hollywood also inspires him. Smith incorporated her into himself. Secondly, I see ideals from the classical tradition in Smith's work such as catharsis, dramatic action, and authenticity but different means to achieve them.

Before turning to a larger analysis of Smith's practice, I will introduce key concepts from Deleuze and Guattari's theories.

Disincarnation: a material assemblage of the classical, Brechtian, Artaudian, and postdramatic concept of character

I argue that disincarnation can be described as a heterogenic assemblage of elements from the four concepts of characters. Inside the assemblage questions about bodily presence, emotional identification and release, and the bodily self as deconstructed on stage are renegotiated. However, what is an assemblage? In the following section I introduce four key concepts from Deleuze and Guattari's *A Thousand Plateaus*: assemblage, becoming, becoming-woman and the Body without Organs (BwO). I will refer to these key concepts throughout the rest of the dissertation. Central to all four concepts are, as Rosi Braidotti also points out, that Gilles Deleuze breaks away from thinking in sameness and fixed identities to instead thinking in positive differences. She argues that the Deleuzian becoming can be understood as a diverse, heterogenic, never-ending journey of transformation (Braidotti 1994:111).

Assemblage

Deleuze and Guattari present their book *A Thousand Plateaus* as an example of an assemblage:

> In a book, as in all things, there are lines of articulation or segmentarity, strata and territories; but also lines of flight, movements of deterritorialization and destratification. Comparative rates of flow on these lines produce phenomena of relative slowness and viscosity, or, on the contrary, of acceleration and rupture. All this, lines and measurable speeds, constitutes an assemblage. A book is an assemblage of this kind, and as such is unattributable. It is a multiplicity—but we don't know yet what the multiple entails when it is no longer attributed, that is, after it has been elevated to the status of a substantive. One side of a machinic assemblage faces the strata, which doubtless make it a kind of organism, or signifying totality, or determination attributable to a subject; it also has a side facing a body without organs, which is continually dismantling the organism, causing asignifying particles or pure intensities to pass or circulate, and attributing to itself subjects that it leaves with nothing more than a name as the trace of an intensity (Deleuze and Guattari 1987:4)

As suggested in the quote, Deleuze and Guattari characterize an assemblage as a heterogenic (slow and fast, steadiness and speediness) montage of phenomena. Deleuze and Guattari describe an assemblage as connections between multiplicities and follow Spinoza's theory that "each individual is an infinite multiplicity" (Deleuze and Guattari 1987:254). As mentioned earlier, disincarnation can be described as a heterogenic assemblage of elements from the four concepts of characters, where each element is a multiplicity connecting to other multiplicities: multiplicities that continually "cross over into each other" (Deleuze and Guattari 1987:33) and connect to other multiplicities. Deleuze and Guattari describe how the material, the social and the semiotic, converge inside assemblages: "An assemblage, in its multiplicity, necessarily acts on semiotic flows, material flows, and social flows simultaneously" (Deleuze and Guattari 1987:23). The different concepts of character similarly act on material (Artaud), semiotic (Aristotle) discursive, and social flows (Brecht). According to Elizabeth Grosz, Deleuze and Guattari do not see the body as an organic totality, but rather as kind of "machinist assemblage of desire" (Deleuze and Guattari 1987:2). Grosz explains in relation to Deleuze and Guattari's ideas about corporeality and materiality that the body is

> a series of processes, energies and forces, a mode of linkage, a discontinuous series of processes, organs, flows and matter (...) The ways in which (fragments of) bodies come together or align with themselves to other things produce what Deleuze has called a machine: a non-totalized collection of or assemblage of heterogeneous elements and materials. In itself, the body is not a machine, but in its active relations to other social entities it forms machine connections (Grosz 1994:120).

I take from this quote that becoming is material as opposed to the montage. Becoming is a montage on a material level. I do not see it as either-or (material/discursive) but as both-and, so, more precisely: Disincarnation is an assemblage or montage that carries a material dimension that expresses itself via the traffic between emotional immersion/identification, physical presence/insistency, and critical reflection. Disincarnation underlines the material dimension that perhaps could be covered by Munoz's disidentificaiton term. However, disincarnation is a performative practice where emotional immersion/identification from the classical character concept unfolds itself alongside a physical-bodily insistence *and* a deconstructive/alienation self-reflectioness. Disincarnation as a performative practice has an in-betweenness nature and inhabits the intervals between traditionally opposing concepts of character.

Disincarnation: a practice in constant becoming

Becoming is a key term in Deleuze and Guattari's philosophy. Becoming refers to an in-between identity that is never fixed but in constant becoming. Deleuze and Guattari compare becoming to the rhizome to underline the unfinished nature of becoming (Deleuze and Guattari 1987:239). According to Deleuze and Guattari, the rhizome is a subterranean stem or a special network of plants entangled underground (Deleuze and Guattari 1987:6). Put differently, a rhizome is weed such as grasses whose rooting stays at the surface of the earth. The rhizome refers to a state characterized by constant movement: an ongoing process, with no beginning, middle, and end (Deleuze and Guattari 1987:21). One of the cornerstones of Deleuze and Guattari's thinking is a positive account of a multiple or schizophrenic subject with an identity in constant variation or becoming. In "What Is Becoming?" Deleuze uses Alice from *Alice in Wonderland* as an example of a character with an infinite identity or identity in constant variation or becoming: Alice is becoming larger and smaller, that is more and less, simultaneously. Alice does not have a fixed identity: she is multiple things at once, a multiple or schizophrenic subject. This creates identity confusion and poses a challenge to the stability of her identity (Deleuze 1993:40). As another example of a person exhibiting an identity in variation, Deleuze and Guattari mention Virginia Woolf and describe how "Virginia Woolf (…) made all of her life and work a passage, a becoming, all kinds of becomings between ages, sexes, elements, and kingdoms" (Deleuze and Guattari 1987:252). The disincarnation practice is a practice in constant becoming, constantly in flux driving back and forth between centers such as the four concepts of characters, never settling in one of them.

Becoming-woman

In *A Thousand Plateaus*, Deleuze and Guattari explain that becomings are always minoritarian and describe different becomings such as becoming-woman, becoming-animal, becoming-child, becoming-black, and more. To understand these various becomings, it is central to Deleuze and Guattari to point out that there is no becoming-man simply because

> man is majoritarian par excellence, whereas becomings are minoritarian (…) Majority implies a state of domination (…) the majority in the universe assumes as pregiven the right and power of man. In this sense women, children, but also animals, plants and molecules are minoritarian. It is perhaps the special situation of women in relation to the

> man-standard that accounts for the fact that becomings, being minoritarian, always pass through a becoming-woman (Deleuze and Guattari 1987:291).

Deleuze and Guattari explain that there is no becoming-man because the white man constitutes the majority, man is a fixed majoritan position and all that stand in opposition to this ideal are considered abnormal or minoritarian. However, one could argue that men are also shaped by society and that it is possible to be a man who struggles with his majority identity. In "One Less Manifesto" (1997) Deleuze explains how minority has two meanings: The first is a state of rule, excluded from majority such as women, children, the south, and the third world. The second is a becoming you enlist in, where the goal is to become minority. Deleuze further explains, "Women are a minority in the first sense. But, in the second sense, everyone is becoming woman, a becoming woman who acts as everyone's potentiality. In this context, women are no more becoming-women than men themselves" (Deleuze 1997:255). So, Deleuze refers to a universal becoming-minority. However, why do all becomings go through becoming-woman? According to Deleuze and Guattari, being minoritarian as well as all becomings go through becoming-woman because of the relation between women and the man-standard (Deleuze and Guattari 1987:291). Pointing to women as the ones who can describe becoming is a way for Deleuze and Guattari to criticize the Oedipal model. In *Anti Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (1983) Deleuze and Guattari voice their critique of Freud's definition of desire through lack, as the classical psychoanalysis logic of desire will have it:

> What we call anthropomorphic representation is just as much the idea that there are two sexes as the idea that there is only one. We know how Freudianism is permeated by this bizarre notion that there is finally only one sex, the masculine, in relation to which the woman, the feminine, is defined as a lack, an absence. It could be thought at first that such a hypothesis founds the omnipotence of a male homosexuality (Deleuze and Guattari 1983:294).

Deleuze and Guattari do not think of desire in these negative terms but instead think of desire in positive terms and beyond the Freudian gender dualism. For Deleuze and Guattari, desire is not only conceived through the production of fantasies (Deleuze and Guattari 1983:25). Desire is something that stretches beyond humans and onto animals, the social sphere, and society in general where it makes infinite connections (Deleuze and Guattari 1983:5).

Body without organs (BwO): Attacking the organic subject

How do you enter into an assemblage with others and other things? How do you open yourself up to becoming? In his radio play *To Have Done With the Judgment of God* (1947) Antonin Artaud wrote something that might provide an answer: "When you have given him a body without organs, you will have relieved him from all his automatisms and rewarded him with his real freedom" (Artaud1963:61). Deleuze and Guattari draw on Artaud's description of the body without organs. Where do all our automatic reactions come from? They come from our Western hierarchical society that creates a stratification or categorization of our bodies categorizing us as daughters, mothers, men, women, heterosexual, and so forth. Deleuze and Guattari call this the organized body organism: "You will be organized, you will be an organism, you will articulate your body otherwise you're just depraved (…) You will be a subject, nailed down as one, a subject of the enunciation recoiled into a subject of the statement – otherwise you're just a tramp" (Deleuze and Guattari 1987:159). This quote implies that the organism needs the categorization and stratification to uphold the norms of a society, that is, capitalism, heteronormativity, and perhaps vice versa. In these processes we are subjects to subjectification, which means we are expected to behave in a certain way as a mother or father, woman or man (here our genitals determine whether you are a woman or a man) and abide by the conventions of these roles (cf. Judith Butler's gender acts). If we step outside these conventions, we are looked upon as outcast, perverse, or crazy. Deleuze and Guattari stress that it can be extremely hard to break free of these conventions and gain free will and identity and they ask how we can free ourselves from subjectifications that chain us to the dominant regime (Deleuze and Guattari 1987:160). According to Deleuze and Guattari, creating a BwO is a way to unhook ourselves from subjectifications as a whole (Deleuze and Guattari 1987:151). The BwO is what remains when you strip the organism of its organ's meaning, its conventions, and hierarchies. The organism will then be delivered from all automatic reactions. Deleuze and Guattari see the body as a field of desire, which can be plotted into different systems at the same time: "The BwO is desire: it is that which one desires and by which one desires" (Deleuze and Guattari 1987:165). The body without organs is a body free from the regulations of society open to entering assemblages with others.

Deleuze and Guattari's project with concepts such as the assemblage, becoming, becoming-woman, and the BwO is to break away from ideas about fixed identities and representationalism through an anti-Oedipal subject of multiplicity that is free from regulations, hierarchical structures, and binary oppositions in society. As Grosz notes, the concepts of becoming, assemblage, BwO are closely related in their rejection of unity and thinking in dualisms.

Becoming is a state of in-between-ness or multiplicity where you are never nailed down to a certain fixed category, your identity is never fixated or finished but always in flux. Similarly, disincarnation refers to an assemblage of character concepts in constant movement: a becoming-character without ever finally arriving at a fixed and stable character or identity. In the next chapter I will analyze Smith's practice as as a continuous process of becoming(-Montez).

CHAPTER 2: DISINCARNATION: THE ETHICAL-POLITICAL POTENTIAL OF BECOMING-MONTEZ

From *Chapter 1* we learned that Smith utilizes Montez to develop his own radical aesthetics and politics and that my development of the disincarnation practice springs from his simultananeous Montez-incarnation and destabilization. In the following chapter, I analyze Smith's practice as an exemplary case study for disincarnation as a material assemblage of the four concepts of character. First, I analyze how Smith's life and practice is characterized by becoming-Montez. Second, in four works by Smith: a photograph for the performance *I was a male Yvonne de Carlo for the Lucky Landlord Underground*, the live performance *The Secret of Rented Island* the film *Normal Love*, and the text "The Memoirs of Maria Montez or Wait for Me at the Bottom of the Pool", I will analyze the ethical-political potential in Smith's zig-zag between emotional identification, alienation techniques, materiality, and the multiple subject in an assemblage of character.

Jack Smith and the disincarnation practice

The disincarnation term arose from my examination of Jack Smith's practice. In Smith's practice, disincarnation is linked to his obsession with Maria Montez. Smith's Montez-disincarnation reanimates character by driving back and forth between the four concepts of character or acting techniques. Franko notes that Kazuo Ohno's cross-dressing plays away from fixating or subverting identities as we often see in Western theater. Franko goes on to argue that "work like Ohno's, which holds polarities at bay, is also a third term for theatrical theory: neither subjectivism nor alienation" (Franko 1995:104). I argue that Smith's Montez-disincarnation is both-and: both subjectivism and alienation, both subjective emotional identification with Montez and alienation of her. Smith's Montez disincarnation partly transcends his subjectivity because the disincarnation is larger than himself as it stretches beyond himself and swarms onto other performers and places. Part of his subjectivity is suspended as he creates an assemblage with Montez, but only partly, as Smith simultaneously exhibits the construction of the assemblage in a practice of alienation. Smith's disincarnation of Montez swings back and forth between concepts connected to the classical character concept such as emotional identification and release, bodily

incarnation and concepts connected to Brechtian and postdramatic concepts of character such as alienation techniques and the postdramatic multiple (drag) subject. Regarding the relationship between the character and the outer world, no concept of character or model of representation adheres all the way through in Smith's practice. Smith never became locked in one of the four concepts; rather, they constitute a field of opportunities for him. I see a complexity in the movement of layer upon layer of different materials and concepts of characters in Smith's art – more than a Freudian depth where the underlying layers behind a person's behavior can be investigated as more or less conscious – and a transformation that makes it possible to speak into political and performative discourses.

Disincarnation and the body without organs (BwO)

Deleuze and Guattari's philosophy including the BwO is about never-ending processes breaking up the subject and thinking beyond subjectivity in a refusal of gender categories and the Oedipal prison. Although Deleuze and Guattari describe the body without organs as something that dismantles the organism and subjectivism (Deleuze and Guattari 1987:160-161) they note that:

> You have to keep enough of the organism for it to reform each dawn; and you have to keep small supplies of significance and subjectification, if only to turn them against their own systems when the circumstances demand it, when things, persons, even situations, force you to; and you have to keep small rations of subjectivity in sufficient quantity to enable you to respond to the dominant reality (Deleuze and Guattari 1987:160-161).

Following Grosz, I interpret Deleuze and Guattari's comments about keeping tiny amounts of subjectification, so that they do not reduce the BwO to pure deconstruction or a non-organic unit without genitals (Grosz 1994:172). Deleuze and Guattari still speak of a material body and so the BwO is not a break with biology. On the contrary, Deleuze and Guattari discuss matter and materialism in very broad terms à la new materialist Karen Barad. For Deleuze and Guattari, the body is many things, and the BwO is not about wholeness or unity but more about transmutation and transformation like a mash of cells that you look at through a microscope. This dissertation and the concept of disincarnation attempt to explore how Smith on an artistic and practical level navigates through some of these states formulated philosophically by Deleuze and Gauttari. Disincarnation is a mode of embodying that entails the breaking up of the subject into a multiple, fragmented, or deconstructed subject as described by Fuchs but also holds an amount of

cohesion, consistency, subjectivism, and signification. Despite the breaking up of stable identities, the subject, and the Oedipal prison, there are elements of identification and subjectification in Smith's work connected to his obsession with Montez. The question is what Smith does with these elements. I argue that he turns his personal identification with Montez as abject into radical politics. His political engagement comes from his personal experience with being a homosexual artist living in poverty. Smith's disincarnation practice has an ethical-political potential because, similar to the BwO, disincarnation rejects thinking in dualisms and is free from automatic reactions, normative cuts, and the conventions of society that categorize and discriminate minorities. Smith's disincarnation practice presents new categories and possibilities via his in-between creatures.

Disincarnation: Becoming-Montez: A relation of desire

In the following section, I argue that Smith's entire life and practice is characterized by becoming-Montez. As an example of becoming, Deleuze and Guattari turn to Captain Ahab from Herman Melville's novel *Moby Dick*. According to Deleuze and Guattari, Captain Ahab is becoming-whale (Deleuze and Guattari 1987:243). Deleuze and Guattari mention several times that: "Becoming is certainly not imitating or identifying with something" (Deleuze and Guattari 1987:239). However, if becoming is not about imitation or identification, does Captain Ahab really become a white whale? Is there a concrete material animal transformation at play? Deleuze and Guattari ask and answer this question themselves:

> If becoming animal does not consist in playing animal or imitating an animal, it is clear that the human being does not "really" become an animal any more than the animal "really" becomes something else. Becoming produces nothing other than itself. We fall into a false alternative if we say that you either imitate or you are. What is real is the becoming itself (…) The becoming animal of the human being is real, even if the animal the human being becomes is not; and the becoming-other of the animal is real, even if that something other it becomes is not (Deleuze and Guattari 1987:238).

As the quote suggests, the answer is neither. Ahab does not imitate the white whale nor does he turn into a concrete white whale; he becomes the white whale. Usually, imitation is a conscious choice; however, Captain Ahab does not decide to do an imitation of the white whale, becoming happens more like an event. Deleuze and Guattari use Robert de Niro's becoming-crab as

another example of becoming-animal and expand on how Captain Ahab and Robert de Niro become animal:

> When Robert de Niro is becoming-crab or Ahab becoming-whale they do not imitate a crab or a whale. It is not about a concrete material transformation but about a new idea about the crab and the whale: The actor Robert De Niro walks "like" a crab in a certain film sequence, but, he says, it is not a question of his imitating a crab; it is a question of making something that has to do with the crab enter into composition with the image, with the speed of the image (Deleuze and Guattari 1987:274).

The key point in this quote is a confirmation of the fact that Ahab does not actually become the white whale, becoming is not fixed like that, becoming is related to Ahab taking on some of the whale's behavior. As such, becoming is not about a concrete material, real transformation but about a new idea about the crab or the whale. By making something that perhaps reminds us of a crab or whale, for example, by taking on some of the crab's behavior through relations between speed and rest to a point where Robert de Niro is no longer able to distinguish himself from the crab.

At first, I examined Smith's life and practice as becoming-Montez because he seemed to be so obsessed with her chasing after her like Captain Ahab chasing Moby Dick almost wanting to be her or become one with her and then perhaps find rest. Later, after reading Deleuze and Guattari more closely, I discovered, as I explained in my introduction to Smith and Montez, Smith did not only take on reconfigurations of Montez's clothes and costumes to show how Hollywood painted her as the stereotypical female Latin American Other, he also took on some of her behavior: Montez's "failed" acting informs Smith's failure aesthetic that runs through all of his work from his first finished film *Scotch Tape* (1959) that is based on the incorporation of a mistake. Smith's failure aesthetic expresses itself in his Montez-inspired non-acting, text (re)presentation, filming techniques, set and costume design, and presentation of the body. This powered my Smith becoming-Montez theory which was further fueled by Smith's Montez drag characters pulling in different directions simultaneously toward an in-between (sexual) identity: in other words, becoming-Montez. Smith is becoming-Montez by taking on some of Montez's behavior and creating an assemblage with Montez, which gives us a new idea about Montez. Smith enters an assemblage with Montez and exercises a materially-based (emotional) identification with Montez through his appropriation of her revolutionary behavior and looks. How does Smith's emotional identification with Montez fit in with Deleuze and Guattari stressing several times that

becoming is not to imitate or identify with someone or something? Deleuze and Guattari wish to get away from representation or one-on-one identification and imitation (if such a thing even exists), which is also Smith's goal. We cannot speak of a one-on-one Smith-Montez identification or imitation. What is at stake is a mutation, reorganization, transformation, or disincarnation. Smith does not experience himself as Montez: he becomes Montez. In "What Is Becoming?" (1993), Deleuze describes how becoming refers to something or someone in constant movement and variation and how becoming pulls in several directions simultaneously; becoming "eludes the present" (Deleuze 1993:39) and does not accept "the distinction of before and after, or of past and future" (Deleuze 1993:39). Becoming is never fixed and can never "become so," then it is not becoming anymore (Deleuze 1993:40). In Smith's becoming-Montez there was no before or a past where he was not Montez (the possibility was always there) and a future where he then has "become so" (Montez). He is both (and other things) at once. Smith is not to be taken for Montez, nor does he pretend to be her, he is becoming-Montez. Smith's life was an ongoing artistic event and had the unfinished nature of becoming. In "Language: Major and Minor" (1993), Deleuze explains how we can think of "minorities as subsystems; and the minoritarian as a potential, creative and created becoming" (Deleuze 1993:150). According to Deleuze, minorities are always in the creative process of becoming something (Deleuze 1993:151). Smith's Montez drag is not fixed or stable, but rather in constant movement; he is never her. His becoming-Montez process never ends; he is always in the creative, potential process of becoming her. Smith's becoming-Montez surpasses imitation or parody and is better described as a relation of desire that reaches beyond him and onto other performers and spaces transcending Smith's subjectivity. Becoming is par excellence unfinished, and this is one reason why becoming is relevant to Smith's open-ended works of art. Smith's aesthetic can be described as abject, and becoming-Montez – more than as psychoanalytical.

Disincarnation: character concepts in continuous variation create presence

Smith's disincarnation practice can be described as a material Smith-Montez assemblage. Inside the Smith-Montez assemblage, elements from different concepts of character are placed in what Deleuze calls continuous variation. In "One Less Manifesto" (1997), Deleuze examines ways to escape representation in the theater through an analysis of the practice of Italian actor, writer, poet, and film director Carmelo Bene. Deleuze argues that elements of power in theater ensure the correlation of the scenic representation (Deleuze 1997:241). Examples of these elements of power are a plot-based classical dramaturgy and coherent character and especially text

representation. Deleuze argues that Bene, with his performative writing, rebels against representation by subtracting and amputating elements of power in the represented, in history, structure, and text by subtracting constants and stable elements belonging to the Major.[26] As an example, Bene cuts out the protagonist Romeo from Shakespeare's Romeo and Juliet (Deleuze 1997:245). Instead of representations of conflict Deleuze argues, that Bene suggests the presence of variation (Deleuze 1997:252).

Laura Cull unpacks how Deleuze's theories can be used to "generate a new understanding of presence in performance that differs from the deconstructive argument, but nevertheless, does not involve some kind of return to essentialism or traditional metaphysics" (Cull 2009:7).[27] To rethink presence in performance, Cull develops her own term *differential presence* from Deleuze's five theories on difference, becoming, affect, the 'virtual/actual' distinction, and duration (Cull 2009:9) as well as his briefly sketched concepts of presence (Cull 2009:43-44). As Cull explains, for Deleuze, in minor theater, such as Bene's, presence is created by placing all the different scenic elements in constant variation as opposed to fixing the scenic elements in a coherent narrative (Cull 2009:40-41). As such, Bene's work represents presence as variation for Deleuze. My dissertation discusses embodiment and the material body on a new level different from the deconstructionists. The new level I present is informed by Cull's Deleuze interpretation, which includes perceiving presence *as* difference (Cull 2009:18). It also includes locating the operation of difference in a more material context than the deconstructivist discursive context (Cull 2009:24). I aim to do so by focusing on a more nuanced understanding of the bodily self as deconstructed. Fuchs' multiple subject has been disassociated from presence and deconstructs

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[26] Deleuze describes the three stages of Bene's performative writing as a complete critical operation where Bene is: "1) deducting the stable elements. 2) placing everything in continuous variation. 3) then transposing everything in *minor*…" (Deleuze 1997:246). According to Deleuze, Bene's theater becomes a non-mimetic, non-representational theater that inspired artists such as Artaud, Wilson, Grotowski, and The Living Theatre (Deleuze 1997:241).

[27] Turning to presence in philosophy, Cull argues that since Derrida's critique of the metaphysics of presence, especially in the essay, "The Theater of Cruelty and the Closure of Representation," thoughts on presence in performance have been avoided in performance studies until recently because it has been linked to Derrida's theories on the term "*différance*" that refers to "the irreducible delay between thinking, speaking, and hearing" (Cull 2009:13). The term *différance* spurred a broad critique of presence and has been interpreted by many poststructuralist thinkers as the reason for the impossibility of a pure presence, immediacy, and an unmediated contact between the stage and the audience (Cull 2009:12). Examples of theorists advocating this interpretation of a Derridean deconstruction of presence include theorists such as Herbert Blau, Philip Auslander and Elinor Fuchs. As Cull points out "Fuchs argues that the avant-garde Theatre of Presence that was seen to have dominated the 1960s and 70s had now been surpassed by a post-Derridean Theatre of Absence that 'displaces the subject' and 'destabilizes meaning'" (Cull 2009:16). In her comparison of Derrida and Deleuze, Cull argues that their projects are different in the sense that "Derrida *does* primarily address difference in a discursive context, whereas Deleuze's extended analysis locates the operation of difference in the realm of materiality" (Cull 2009:24). With Deleuze, Cull seeks to "rehabilitate categories that have been deconstructed by Derridean's as synonyms for presence, such as 'the body'" (Cull 2009:25). In performance theory, Cull argues that Josette Féral's essay "Performance and Theatricality: The Subject Demystified" (1982) is a vital "precedent for thinking presence *as* difference, rather than as the denial of difference" (Cull 2009:18).

categories such as character, self, and voice. However, as I argued in my introduction to the postdramatic concept of character, because of the connection between the body and presence Fuchs kept the body as absolute presence. I will argue that bodily presence can be thought together with a multiple subject and that disincarnation places a positivity of difference at the fore in relation to the body. Smith's practice is based on continuous variations on Montez and her films; he places her and them in continuous variation. I argue that the bodily self as deconstructed such as Smith's Montez-disincarnation exhibits a dynamic bodily presence. Smith plays with representationalism by obstructing elements of power in Hollywood films but also, similar to Bene, in canonical Major dramas of, for example, Shakespeare and Strindberg. Smith places those texts in continuous variation similar to the use of text in postdramatic theater. Smith's practice encourages us to think about presence, text, and character representation as dynamic.

In the rest of this chapter, I analyze a photograph from a photo session for Smith's live performance *I Was a Male Yvonne de Carlo for the Lucky Landlord Underground*, Smith's live performance *The Secret of Rented Island*, Smith's film *Normal Love*, and Smith's essay "The Memoirs of Maria Montez or Wait for Me at the Bottom of the Pool." I analyze ways in which Smithian disincarnation reassembles character by placing the four concepts of character in continuous variation and how this creates dynamic bodily presence. The results of the mixing of character concepts are the bodily self as deconstructed and identities and scenic elements put in constant variation. I argue that despite placing the scenic elements in constant variation, Smith's Montez integration anchors the variations, which provides an amount of coherence to his practice. I also investigate further how Smith identifies with Montez.

Surface effects: The outside leads to the inside

The visual above the words

As an example of how the postdramatic and the classical concepts of character converge in Smith's disincarnation practice, I turn to an analysis of Smith's use of visual surface effects. Smith is highly invested in surface effects and visual elements, which links him to postdramatic theater and *The Theater of Images* (1977) presented by Bonnie Marranca. The theater of images values the visual above the words. In "The Perfect Filmic Appositeness of Maria Montez," Smith explains that Montez and her films do not represent good acting or film technique. For him, the effect of Montez could not be put into words. "Her image spoke," he wrote (Smith 1997:29), not

her representation of the words. This is Smith's explanation for the bad critique Montez and her films suffered. Smith believed that the critics, being writers themselves, were most comfortable with words, writing, and the representations of such and, therefore, "hostile and uneasy in the presence of a visual phenomenon" (Smith 1997:29). The reason for this uneasiness can be attributed to a Western logocentrism and classical theater tradition where the verbal is valued above the nonverbal as Jacques Derrida unpacks and critiques. Rebelling against Western logocentrism and classical character and text representation Smith places the nonverbal such as the visual and the body at the center of his work by cultivating Montez as a visual phenomenon by appropriating her visual characteristics, surface effects, or inscriptions on the body such as clothes, makeup, and gestures.

However, where do these surface effects lead and what do they signify? Following Elizabeth Grosz, Smith highlights inscriptions on the bodily surface, which situates Smith within an outside in tradition. Let me explain. In her book, *Volatile Bodies* (1994), Grosz's project is to create new positive accounts of the body granting the body agency. Grosz seeks to dissolve the mind/body dualism by unfolding how a psychical interiority depends on a corporeal exteriority and vice versa (Grosz 1994:xii). Do we experience the world from the inside out or the outside in? Along the lines of Merleau-Ponty, Grosz's answer is neither. She explains how the Möbius strip is a better model: "The Möbius strip has the advantage of showing the inflection of mind into body and body into mind, the ways in which, through a kind of twisting or inversion, one side becomes the other" (Grosz 1994:xii). As such, the Möbius strip shows that contrary to the Cartesian mind/body dualism the inside (mind) is inseparable from the outside (the body). The mind/body dualism is reflected in different acting theories. Strasberg's method acting primarily works from the inside out: The truth or heart of the character is expressed through the actor's psychological and emotional immersion with the character. Bertolt Brecht, Robert Wilson, and most postdramatic theater primarily work from the outside in: The truth or heart of the character is expressed through the actor's gestures and posing in relation to lighting, costumes, and set design. The actor *shows* the character. Returning to Smith, Tavel points out that Smith told Tavel that his study of Montez "was purely visual" (Tavel 1997:95). This comment suggests a purely superficial, outside in approach, however following the logic of the Möbius strip the outside inverts on itself or crosses itself leading to the inside without leaving the surface. Grosz argues that the body in many recent texts is seen as a blank page on which inscriptions such as tattoos can take place, which means that the analogy between body and text is close when thinking about how instruments to write with from pens to clothing and laser beams work to mark the body's blank page (Grosz 1994:117). However, Grosz explains:

> These interactions and linkages can be seen as surface effects, relations occurring on the surface of the skin and various body parts (….) They are not merely superficial, for they generate, they produce, all the effects of a psychical interior an underlying depth, individuality, or consciousness, much as the Möbius strip creates both an inside and an outside. Tracing the outside of the strip leads one directly to its inside without at any point leaving the surface. The depth, or rather the effects of depth, is thus generated purely through the manipulation, rotation, and inscription of the flat plane – an opposite metaphor for the undoing of dualism (Grosz 1994:116-17).

In Smith's practice, surface effects produce the effects of depth, individuality, and inner life without leaving the surface; the surface leads to the inside, and the inside leads to the surface, Strasberg leads to Brecht and vice versa. I will try to explain how this works with an example from Smith's practice.

The image (see image 11) shows Smith in a photo session for his live performance *I Was a Male Yvonne de Carlo for the Lucky Landlord Underground* (1982).[28] Disincarnation is at play because the character we see can be characterized as an assemblage of Brechtian alienation techniques such as the theatrical gestures and the beard that breaks the illusion of femininity, Artaudian bodily intensity, and the postdramatic multiple drag subject. The classical concept is represented because all these different elements points to Maria Montez, which anchors and brings coherence and consistency to the images. What we see is Smith in *Arabian Nights* drag: a Caucasian male in oriental drag. The surface effects include excessive use of jewelry, makeup, headscarves and scarfs wrapped around the upper and lower body à la Montez's or de Carlo's stereotypical oriental characters. We know that a Caucasian male is presented to us in drag because of Smith's skin color and the goat beard which disrupts the stereotypical female oriental character by blurring the binary oppositions between two ethnicities and two sexes creating a new category: a multiple subject or an in-between creature. When studying the image, I think of a magician, shaman, or fortuneteller who just stepped out from Aladdin's cave to spellbind and transform his audience. The intense look and theatrical gesture suggests that this is a magician trying to spellbind or hypnotize you.

[28] Smith's film *I Was a Male Yvonne de Carlo* (1967-70s) took its name from the performance.

11. Untitled. Jack Smith. 1982. Copyright Jack Smith Archive. Courtesy of Gladstone Gallery, New York. Photograph by Uzi Parnes.

In his book, *Adam's Navel: A Natural and Cultural History of the Human Form* (2004), Michael Sims explains:

> In Shamanism and other magical thinking, wearing the skin of an animal bestows upon the bearer the creature's unique traits and instinctive wisdom. Because snakes shed their skins as they grow, many primitive cultures incorporated real and symbolic skin into rituals accompanying initiations and other milestones in life. Any emblem of rebirth becomes a symbol of eternal renewal, and therefore skin is associated with resurrection and immortality. Some people have worn different-colored animal skins to represent two sides of human nature, or even the notion of manifestation versus the disembodied (Sims 2004:14).

Smith's oriental drag character can be seen as a shaman figure resurrecting or invoking the dead Montez by wearing Montez's symbolic skin such as makeup, jewelry and costumes. In this sense tracing the oriental drag surface effects lead directly to Smith's inner emotional identification with Montez's beauty and revolutionary behavior. The image is an expression of Smith's emotional identification with Montez and the colonized Orient through a camp orientalism. As such, visual surface produces the effects of inner depth linked to Strasberg and vice versa. Smith escapes accusations of exploitation through this disincarnation by working on and against the white man. Smith punctuates the status of the white man and his stereotypical presentation of the Orient with the body of the white man itself. With the use of surface effects the white male bodily self is deconstructed and transformed into an active materiality exhibiting new possibilities. In this way, Smith's anchoring of the campiness in an aesthetic of the superficial becomes the means to reach complexity and depth and serves Smith's ethical-political, anti-imperialist agenda. Let me explain this further: Grosz refers to Lingis's book, *Excesses: Eros and Culture* (1984), where Lingis discusses body markings and the body markings of the savage vs. the civilized as well as the Western anxiety of the savage (Grosz 1994:138). Grosz explains with Lingis that clothes and makeup mark the body and constitute whether the body is appropriate or inappropriate in terms of cultural expectations and requirements (Grosz 1994:142). Smith's Montez drag characters further a dissolution of the dualism between savage (Montez's portrayal of "the exotic savage") and civilized (Smith as a white man) and confronts the Western anxiety of the Other. In this sense, Smith's use of surface effects has complex implications. As such there is no opposition between surface and depth; they are equal bearers of

meaning in Smith's work. In this sense, he subscribes to the postmodernist approach that there does not necessarily exists a more true, real, or meaningful underlying depth beneath the surface. Hollywood's cultivation of Montez's image as an exotic Latin American on and off screen is a testament to the fact that bodies are often fictionalized and positioned, as Grosz puts it "within myths and belief systems that form a culture's social narratives and self-representations" (Grosz 1994:119). In this way, bodies become emblems, theaters, tableaux of social laws and rights (Grosz 1994:119). Smith's disincarnation challenges these myths with his cross-cultural, cross-gender drag characters.

The interrelation of mind and body is a well-known phenomenon for actors who, for example, wear theatrical makeup to look older or wounded and start to feel older or to feel the pain from the wound. Put differently, to take on a piece of clothing or gesture is a way to feel it. Smith wears Montez's unique visual traits to feel Montez and gain her wisdom. The logic of the Möbius strip is at play again: The outside leads directly to the inside; the surface effects (makeup) that mark actors as old, female, or wounded effect them both physically and emotionally as they start to walk, talk, and feel like an old person, female, or a wounded person. The surface effects and the emotional converge in Smith's practice: Smith assimilates some of the personal and political power he sees in Montez by taking on her clothing and gestures. However, I do not see Smith as the living embodiment of Montez or as Montez being made into flesh through Smith, although you could argue that her spirit to some extent is re-embodied in human form through Smith. Rather, Smith embodies Montez in the sense that he makes her perceptible to us by including parts and features of her in his practice. The term incarnation suggests a fixed identity, which is not the case in Smith's practice. Smith's Montez drag characters absorb the Other (Montez) onto themselves with a difference, which is why disincarnation is at play.

Disincarnation and the masochist aesthetic

I argue that there is a fetishist desire at play in Smith's worship of Montez. What kind of fetish? In the following section, I claim that a masochist fetishism is characteristic of Smith's disincarnation of Montez. In her essay "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema" (1999), Laura Mulvey famously analyzes how women are victims of "the male gaze" and portrayed as passive opposite the active man in Hollywood films including Sternberg's films starring Marlene Dietrich. Bodil Marie Thomsen refers to Mulvey and Mary Ann Doane who both argue that the Hollywood films cater patriarchal needs and lusts by reducing the women represented on screen

to objects of or victims of the male desire and gaze. Doane argues that Jacques Lacan and psychoanalysis are to blame for women's status as objects of desire, reflecting her lack of a phallus (Thomsen 1997:191). Thomsen also points out how Mulvey connects sadism, voyeurism, and the male gaze because the women in Hollywood films are objects or victims of sadist voyeurism where the woman is submissive to the man (Thomsen 1997:191). Thomsen criticizes Mulvey and Doane's analysis of Sternberg's films starring Dietrich. Via Gaylyn Studlar's book *In the Realm of Pleasure* (1988) and Studlar's article "Masochism, Masquerade, and the Erotic Metamorphoses of Marlene Dietrich" (1990), Thomsen argues that Mulvey's presentation of the woman as passive and the man as active is destabilized in Sternberg's films, for example, *The Devil is a Woman* (1935), since the gaze is Dietrich's (Thomsen 1997:200). With Studlar, Thomsen argues that there is not a voyeuristic male gaze at play in Sternberg's film but rather a masochist structure celebrating the female figure because Dietrich's characters keep the men in constant masochist suspense, she is not submissive to them (Thomsen 1997:200). In *Masochism Coldness and Cruelty* (1989), Deleuze distinguishes clearly between sadism and masochism through an analysis of the writings of Marquis de Sade and Leopold von Sacher-Masoch. Deleuze presents two ways of entering into a pact with the devil as analogous to sadism and masochism: A sadist is possessed by the devil whereas a masochist enters an alliance with the devil. Alternatively, as Deleuze puts it, a masochist is a victim in search of a torturer whereas the sadist is a torturer in search of a victim. The masochist enters a contractual alliance with a torturer that includes formal, written, and verbal descriptions of what is going to take place (Deleuze 1989:20). Deleuze describes how suspense and waiting for the actual act to take place are key elements in the masochist alliance (Deleuze 1989:25). As Thomsen point out, Deleuze argues that it is a misconception that the sadist and the masochist are partners or counterparts, because the sadist does not want the victim to enjoy his torments. The masochist shapes the person the masochist chose to be his or her tormenter (Thomsen 1997:251). A different way to describe the difference is that voyeurism is about ruling to destroy or unite, which means there is some kind closure involved which is not the case for masochism as there is no closure in a masochist aesthetic. This is a part of the pleasurable suspense for the masochist. This lack of closure connects to the BwO in the sense that the BwO is never ending. The BwO is an open organism that represents intensities without seeing positions of meaning and opinions.

I now return to the question about what kind of Montez fetish is at play in Smith's practice. Does Montez possess Smith? A spiritual possession would mean that Montez's spirit temporarily takes control of Smith's body. Reincarnation also comes to mind and is useful in the sense that it refers to the idea of the soul as a psychological continual and constant identity. Is Montez's soul passed

onto Smith's body? Perhaps Smith summons Montez from the dead and pulls her into his body? Is Montez a fetish object to Smith and, if so, is it of a voyeuristic/sadist or masochist nature? I argue that Smith is not a sadist possessed by the devil (Montez) rather Smith's celebration of Montez is masochist because he enters an alliance with her. He chooses her to be his "tormenter." I claim that Montez is the fetish object of Smith but (like Dietrich) not a submissive one. Smith was a homosexual and as such Montez was not an object for Smith's male gaze and sexual desire. Smith's desire for Montez is based on idolization and identification. Smith identifies with Montez and delivers himself to Montez, making her the subject and, as Tavel puts it, "the maker of all art" (Tavel 1997:91). Smith cannot be united with Montez, which adds a masochistic suspense feeling to his becoming-Montez practice – he is never her. By unfolding a masochist aesthetic celebrating Montez, Smith goes up against the voyeuristic male gaze objectifying women and escapes accusations of exploitation. Smith does not destroy Montez as the sadist would do. He enters an alliance with her and creates something new with her. Returning to the photograph from the photo session for his performance *I Was a Male Yvonne de Carlo for the Lucky Landlord Underground* (1982), Smith invokes our fetishist desires with the image presenting an intensive oriental surface aesthetic and abject sex coming together in a masochist structure that connects to the BwO and disincarnation in a suspense feeling. Smith's character assemblage does not hold any enclosed or whole "truth," "meaning," or closure. The photograph exhibits an intensity or dramatic expression of intense gesture, temperament, and emotion characterized by suspense that keeps us guessing: Is this a male or female? Western or Eastern? Brechtian or Artaudian? This type of masochist suspense is characteristic of the disincarnation practice: The character assemblage is suspended between the different concepts of characters never settling, never ending, or closing. Smith plays with the masochist aesthetic of suspense in text representation, acting techniques, and an excessive oriental aesthetic. This feeling of suspense, among other things, constitutes dramatic action in Smith's work.

Disincarnation and the phony truth

Disincarnation is a mode of embodying in which the visual body and surface effects are thought of as authentic through phony and artificial constructions. In this section, I analyze further how the visual effects are used to explore emotional layers in Smith's practice. In other words how the postdramatic and the classical concept of character converge. Smith is inspired by Josef von Sternberg's image-over-plot approach to filmmaking and a masochist aesthetic. In his acting manifesto "Belated Appreciation of V.S" (1997), Smith comments that he enjoys how Sternberg

let the words "be corny & ridiculous, let them run to travesty – and he invested his images with all the care he rightfully denied the words" (Smith 1997:41-42). Smith was also intrigued by Sternberg's use of actress Marlene Dietrich as "his visual projection – a brilliant transvestite in a world of delirious unreal adventures" (Smith 1997:42). To Smith, Sternberg chose the right bad actor in Dietrich, with the right visual effect that was able to communicate very complex ideas. Smith explains "V.S. knew this and used bad acting regularly as a technique for visual revelation (not storytelling). For he was concerned with personal, intuitive, emotional values – values he found in himself – not in a script. With people as their unique selves, not chessmen in a script" (Smith 1997:42). This is another example of how Smith values classical Strasbergian attributes such as the emotional, but Strasberg and Smith disagree on where to find these values. Smith's ideas about authenticity, emotional release, and good acting are linked to performers who do not pretend to be anything but themselves. Smith despised actors who applied "the rules established by previous successes by others. The more rules broken the more enriched becomes the activity" (Smith 1997:34). This is also one of the reasons why Smith preferred "non-actor stars to 'convincing' actor stars" (Smith 1997:35). Non-actor stars do not know the rules professional actors do they are not schooled. Smith argues that nobody understood that Sternberg went for a deliberately bad expression since Sternberg did not want to hide behind good technique and make impersonal, untrue films (Smith 1997:43). Smith explains about Montez's acting:

> The acting was lousy but if something genuine got on film why carp about acting – which HAS to be phony anyway – I'd RATHER HAVE atrocious acting. Acting to Maria Montez was hoodwinking. Her real concerns (her convincing of beauty/her beauty) were the main concern – her acting had to be secondary" (Smith 1997:34).

Ideas about the genuine and the phony twist into each other as Smith indirectly argues that the genuine or authentic is produced through the phony, lousy, and superficial.
Sternberg informed Smith's work, and – in a way – Montez is Smith's Dietrich. However, Montez's films were made on the basis of Hollywood's commercially oriented artistic ideals whereas Sternberg's artistic ideal was an avant-garde aesthetic and Dietrich his avant-garde muse and star. This makes Dietrich a star of a different format than Montez. Sternberg deliberately worked toward an artificial visual aesthetic with focus on theatrical gestures and costumes – characteristics appropriated by Smith and characteristics we find today in the postdramatic work of Robert Wilson. Smith worked with a Sternberg informed phony and artificial expression in his performances by focusing on the corny and excessive, theatrical

costumes, gestures, and makeup. However, Smith extended the Sternberg and Dietrich masochist aesthetic with the incorporation of mistakes, errors, and other kinds of disruptions of the illusion such as long pauses between the lines and reading off the pages of the script to demonstrate his disbelief in memorizing lines. In other words, he constantly laid bare the construction of the performance. For Smith and Wilson, the artificial does not oppose the authentic and bodily presence as it does in classical acting/method acting. Surface does not oppose depth. Smith and Wilson see the artificial and fake as a gateway to the authentic presence more than as two colliding logics. For both Wilson and Smith the artificial becomes the foundation for authenticity and presence but in different ways. Smith finds authenticity in the campy; he sees an honesty in Montez's "bad," campy acting. Wilson's performers often express this feeling of freedom when performing in Wilson's shows. They are free to fill in the form with their own imagination. This corresponds to Wilson's vision; he explains, "I give you time to reflect, to meditate about other things than those happening on the stage. I give you time and space to think" (Wilson in Shevtsova 2007:56). Smith's DIY aesthetic is trashy, failure-ridden, and improvisational, whereas Wilson is a perfectionist in complete control, there is no improvisation in Wilson's performances where everything is planned carefully, for example, where the actor stands in particular places in relation to the lighting. However, both artists obstruct elements of power such as classical text representation and by channeling a slow-paced, visual, non-psychological, and theatrical collage aesthetic.

In "The Perfect Filmic Appositeness of Maria Montez" (1997), Smith writes about how people might be embarrassed to admit they watched a Montez film or watch them with a guilty pleasure-ambivalence since they are considered corny or not "good taste" or "high culture" (Smith 1997:33). Smith willingly admits that Montez's performances are not examples of good, skilled, or convincing acting. However, text, story, good acting, and plot do not interest Smith. What interests him is Montez as a persona or phenomenon whose effect cannot be put into words (Smith 1997:28-29). Similar to Artaud, Smith is not too interested in psychology or speech but more in speaking to the senses through expressive visual surface effects and gestures, as Artaud argues:

> I say that this concrete language, intended for the senses and independent of speech, has first to satisfy the senses that there is a poetry of the senses, as there is a poetry of language, and that this concrete physical language to which I refer is truly theatrical only to the degree that the thoughts it expresses are beyond the reach of the spoken language (Artaud 1958:37).

Smith values Montez's poetry of the senses: her graceful gestures, movements, and dances above her delivery of the words (Smith 1997:34). Smith appreciates Montez's films because of their rich imagery; the useless storytelling and technique are secondary to him (Smith 1997:33). Smith criticizes plot-driven Hollywood films as well as European films because they miss what is central to the film media: the sense of sight, the spectacle. Smith questions why we are embarrassed by enjoying the phoniness, the low cultural, the corniness, the imagery of these films: "Why resent the patent 'phoniness' of these films – because it holds a mirror to our own, possibly" (Smith 1997:33). This is possibly one of the answers. These films confront us with our phoniness and the phoniness of the world in general, which we would rather repress. It is also on this level that the films have an ethical-political potential. Montez had a stronger impact on Smith; she was truer; she believed she was the role she played stronger than any other actor without knowing any rules of acting, which devaluates Strasberg's method. This is one of the reasons why Smith preferred amateur actors to professional actors.

The dominating surface effect in Smith's practice is a trashy oriental drag aesthetic so excessive that it undermines narratives, plot, and meaning; similar to the BwO, it destroys meaning. Plot and narrative were not important in Montez' s films, according to Smith; it was about the visual. Politically, the aesthetic power of Montez might not have been attributed to her by Hollywood; however, the overexposure of the oriental in her characters created cracks in Hollywood. Smith saw a revolutionary potential and transferred the visual effects in Montez's films to his practice in an exaggerated campy manner exposing Hollywood and capitalism. For Smith, it was not about the underlying depth behind things but the visual surface as expressive and intensive. Smith's work is not about plot but about creating visual surface intensities and explosions. However, I argue that the surface leads directly to the inside without leaving the surface, which means that the implications of Smith's surface aesthetic also include the exhibition of inner depth. Smith's becoming-Montez is based on desire. Smith desired Montez as surface and visual phenomenon and wished to approach the surface and Montez's behavior. However, what function did she serve to him? She has a function for him through her production of mistakes and authenticity. Smith used her to become something third. He created a new montage for his Marxist material political purposes. Did Smith wish to become camp and political and not Montez? Maybe, but to Smith, Montez exhibited the behavior that could lead to revolution. Montez expresses a transcendent individuality, something that goes beyond our usual perception – this is connected to her ability to express something campy. Her performance transcends her as

a star and as a performer and becomes something bigger than both, something with which an audience in minor can identify.

Disincarnation: the failure aesthetic as a site of resistance

Smith's "confounding" devices: Presence twists into anti-illusionary breaks

Before I go on to an analysis of Smith's failure aesthetic, I would like to note that an aesthetic of failure was a fruitful strategy for Smith, but may not be so for other artists and it cannot be elevated to a universal rule. In "During the Second Half of the Sixties" (1997), Richard Foreman describes his experience with Smith's practice. Foreman points to Smith's art as "true art" and as "events of more aesthetic worth, of greater seriousness and human truth, than the Broadway plays at the time" (Foreman 1997:25). Here is another example of how the goals and terminology of the avant-garde resembles the ideals of mainstream theater. However, the means to get to this human truth differ. I find an example of this in Foreman's account of how Smith builds in what Foreman calls different "confounding" devices in his performances (Foreman 1997:26). "Confounding" devices are meant to confuse, perplex, astonish, or surprise the audience, and I might add, to create masochistic suspense. With these "confounding" devices, Smith wanted to make the audience feel that the performance was flawed, filled with mistakes and errors, and failure-ridden. He wanted to give the audience the impression that "everything was going wrong" (Foreman 1997:26). Foreman describes an example of a confounding device being employed by Smith when Smith "extended the wait between the lines of dialogue to five, 10, 20 minutes" and Foreman describes the effect as "exhilarating" (Foreman 1997:26). But why is the effect exhilarating and not just plain boring? Foreman argues that the slowness and a number of confounding devices "brought the audience into a state of present attention" (Foreman 1997:26). The extra daily activity of pausing minutes between lines activates the audience as opposed to leaving them passive lulled into a dream illusion as in classical Broadway plays.[29] What Foreman describes is that the wait creates a thrilling "here and now" – tense and release – suspense feeling and energy à la Japanese Noh drama: a heightened attention-invoking presence. This is another example of how Smith plays with and negotiates the ideal about dramatic action.

[29] "The extra daily" is a phrase coined by Eugenio Barba and Nicola Savarese in *A Dictionary of Theater Anthropology: The Secret Art of the Performer* (1991).

Disincarnation is at play because with the Brechtian alienation effect (the anti-illusionary long wait between lines) Smith invokes an almost Artaudian bodily presence turning the audience's attention to the materiality of the performer in front of them. Putting it differently, I argue that the body is so clearly modulated and staged in Smith's practice that it punctures Artaudian bodily presence but also pure representation. For example when Smith pauses for minutes between lines, when The Wooster Group reenacts a B film or when Andy Warhol is filmed eating a banana, it is so staged and constructed à la Brechtian *verfremdung*, but at the same time, it has an attentiveness, thoroughness, and intensity, and bodily presence à la Stanislavski, Strasberg, and Artaud.

Truth and presence twists into failure

> First, to examine excuses is to examine cases where there has been some abnormality or failure: and as so often, the abnormal will throw light on the normal, will help us to penetrate the blinding veil of ease and obviousness that hides the mechanisms of the natural successful act (Austin 1956-57:5-6).

Austin argues that the abnormal calls us out and opens our eyes to our habitual everyday acts and constructions. In his book *The Necessity of Errors* (2011), John Roberts builds on Austin's theory about the interrelation between the abnormal and the normal by arguing that "errors and mistakes constitute knowledge and truth" (Roberts 2011:5). Following the logic of the Möbius strip truth and error are interdependent: Claims to truth can be made only in the light of previous error, as Roberts explains "The embrace and inclusion of error and 'not knowing' is a constitutive part of 'knowing'"(Roberts 2011:4). The wrongs point to the rights so to speak. In Smith's practice, abnormalities, wrongs, or failures point to the normal in ways that make us question the normal and conventional which has an ethical-political potential to make us rethink the way we treat and categorize the "abnormal". As such, the failure aesthetic is a site of resistance and dynamic bodily presence. A failure aesthetic characterizes Smith's practice. In classical theater and character representation, an actor does not wait several minutes between lines, this is considered abnormal, and if this happens, the prompter takes it as a signal to step in because the actor forgot his line. This is another reason Smith's waiting creates masochist suspense for the audience – many of who are probably thinking: "Did he forget his line? Oh no, he is failing, or something is wrong." Again this is real drama! It turns the audience's attention to

the here-and-now factor and the fact that the transmission of the performance can go wrong. The possibility of error and difference is always there. Smith's abnormal intervention or obstruction of a conventional text representation code deducts a stable element from the performance. As mentioned earlier this invokes presence of variation through an anti-illusionary break. Smith's practice is filled with these – compared to conventional classical acting – failures or abnormalities. The failure aesthetic is a site of resistance for Smith, a protest against representation, capitalism, normative, commercialism, and Hollywood. How so? Smith's rejection of the decadent via the incorporation of trash and tossed-out consumer goods are part of his anti-capitalist agenda and the creation of a platform for his political critique and radical political aesthetic.

Disincarnation and abjection as life-affirming

Abjection is a part of Smith's disincarnation in the sense that Smith disincarnates integral parts of himself, for example, normative conventions connected to his biological sex. Smith presents the bodily self as deconstructed and yet as exceptionally alive and present: in other words, in constant becoming. Similar to the BwO, the abject destroys meaning and order and threatens the subject, according to Kristeva. Halperin turns Kristeva's theories upside down by arguing that when gay people embrace abjection it punctuates its destructive powers, brings healing, and grants gay people a new subjectivity. Halperins' abjection theories deepen the understanding of the disincarnation practice because disincarnation represents subject formations and modes of embodying where the subject is threatened and scattered but simultaneously healed and granted subjectivity.

Kristeva underlines that it is not "lack of cleanliness or health that causes abjection but what disturbs identity, system, order. What does not respect borders, positions, rules. The in-between, the ambiguous, the composite" (Kristeva 1982:4). As such, the abject disrupts identity and order, according to Kristeva. Therefore, the abject can be seen as something that "beseeches and pulverizes the subject" (Kristeva 1982:5). Kristeva explains how the abject can be understood as defilement. Defilement is all that is discarded from the "symbolic order" and therefore breaks with social rationality and the logical order. This leads to a division between society and *filth*. This could be through the separation of this or that group from another, for example, a sexual group from another by banning the defiling element (Kristeva 1982:65). To loathe food is mentioned by Kristeva as one of the oldest forms of abjection. Food loathing is connected to nausea and vomiting. When I vomit: "I spit *myself* out. I abject *myself* within the same motion

through which 'I' claim to establish *myself*" (Kristeva 1982:3). And again the corpse, death, is the utmost of abjection since a border is crossed where "I" no longer expels, but is itself expelled. The corpse points to our materiality and mortality and shows us the waste of our bodies such as vomit drops so that we can live until nothing is left in us and we die (Kristeva 1982:3). In *Volatile Bodies* (1994), Grosz refers to *The Powers of Horror* in which Kristeva describes how the abject is what falls away from the proper, law-abiding, and clean body (Grosz 1994:192). The abject such as bodily fluids (urine, feces, vomit, and so forth), attests to the impossibility of the "clean" and "proper" (Grosz 1994:194). However, everybody must live with this (Grosz 1994:195). Grosz points out that we have become "reinvested in notions of contagion and death, danger and purity as a consequence of the AIDS crisis" (Grosz 1994:193). Like Kristeva, Grosz also points out that the marginal is vulnerable (Grosz 1994:195). Smith was a marginal artist and vulnerable in his own way, and even more so toward the end of his life when he was diagnosed with HIV. The AIDS crisis in the 1980s does not make Kristeva's abjection theories less relevant, on the contrary, and Smith, like Kristeva, cultivates the abject. Kristeva critically surveyed, charted, and analyzed the abject as a phenomenon whereas Smith cultivated the abject through his aesthetic. Smith was discarded from the symbolic order because of his improper, marginal, and unclean (homo)sexuality, especially since he exhibited it publicly which provoked the social rationality and led to the censoring of his work. From a majoritarian perspective, Smith is connected to defilement, taboo, and filth. However, Smith does not try to purify himself from defilement or taboo; on the contrary, he incorporates these elements in his life and practice. Smith incorporates and cultivates Montez as abject (cast out). Following Halperin's take on abjection, I argue that Smith by embracing and resignifying abjection punctuates, refuses and frees himself from the symbolic order's humiliation and persecution in acts of life-affirming defiance. There is a clear connection between Genet's and Jouhandeau's take on abjection and a masochist aesthetic in that each takes pleasure in humiliation and the abject, embrace and welcome the abject and humiliation, and thereby punctuates it.

The theories of Artaud are closely connected to the concept of abjection with his analogy between the theater and the plague. In *The Theater and its Double*, Artaud compares the theater to the plague. Artaud wants to create theater that similar to the plague, effects and unsettles everybody in contact with it, brings out an uncontrollable reaction, unleashes the senses and the emotions, and creates disorder. Confronted with abjection in the shape of the plague or Artaud's theater, normalcy and conformity disintegrate and make way for the truth:

> The action of theater, like that of plague, is beneficial, for, impelling men to see themselves as they are, it causes the mask to fall, reveals the lie, the slackness, baseness, and hypocrisy of our world; it shakes off the asphyxiating inertia of matter which invades even the clearest testimony of the senses; and in revealing to collectivities of men their dark power, their hidden force, it invites them to take, in the face of destiny, a superior and heroic attitude they would never have assumed without it (Artaud 1958:31-32).

Here Artaud describes how a deadly disease such as the plague was beneficiary in the sense that it turns its subjects into heroes. Similar to Genet, Jouhandeau and Artaud, Smith embraces and resignifies abjection. As mentioned earlier, in medicine, catharsis refers to a flushing out or cleasing of the infected stuff. However, in Smith's practice, catharsis is reached through a confrontation and identification with the infection. Smith's practice explores the healing and transformative powers of infection and trash and how the abject forces us to see ourselves as we are, as Artaud describes it. Abjection represents a state of being cast out – be that from the social order or norm, or be it as excrement or vomit or trash. Abjection raises questions about what we include in the social order/symbolic order and what we exclude or expel.[30] Smith's practice cultivates what is expelled from the symbolic order: its trash and minoritarian subjects. Smith's trash aesthetic is abject. Smith uses the abject in performance out of poverty but also to work through being a minority as a homosexual. Smith's approach to the abject is similar to the movement of and purpose of Francois Rabelais' grotesque realism: In the introduction to *Rabelais and His World* (1984) Bakhtin describes how the aesthetic expression of folk-humor or folk carnival humor in the writings of Rabelais is grotesque realism. Grotesque realism is characterized by the positivity of the material bodily principle and exaggerations of the material bodily principle and bodily openings (and fluids) such as drinking, eating, fighting, laughing, working, shitting, and so forth (Bakhtin 1984:18) which represents a degradation of the higher, the divine, and thus oppose the serious tone of the official culture: Idea, spirit, and God. With the focus on the material bodily principle and bodily openings, Bakhtin's theories are linked to the abject and are one side of the carnivalesque.

Smith exaggerates the material bodily principle to punctuate the powers of dominant culture. Smith's practice exhibits an active materiality à la Artaud, but it is so excessive and intense that it mocks Artaudian bodily presence as well as classical "meaning." The following sections provide examples of this.

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[30] Abjection as a term is used in performance theory, for example, in *National Abjection - The Asian American Body on Stage* (2002) Karen Shimakawa discusses how the Asian American body is cast out of U.S. culture.

The positive possibilities of abjection and trash

Disincarnation: Sexuality, humor and horror

In the following, I examine the positive possibilities of the abject in an analysis of Smith's live performance *The Secret of Rented Island* (1976-77). In *Queer Theater* (1978), Stefan Brecht describes *The Secret of Rented Island* in the article "The Horror of Sex". Brecht explains that *The Secret of Rented Island* is Smith's re-performance of Henrik Ibsen's drama *Ghosts* (1881). Ibsen's *Ghosts* tells the story of Mrs. Alving and her son Oswald. Mrs. Alving and Pastor Manders try to cover up the late Mr. Alvings wild lifestyle. Throughout the play, it is implied that Oswald has the sexually transmitted disease syphilis that he inherited from his father. Brecht notes that the performance changed a lot during the run from mid-November 1977 and into the next year (Brecht 1978:157). However, reading Brecht's descriptions of the performances he attended, I found that the different performances had a number of recurring performative elements such as Smith performing the role of Oswald and wearing a scull mask at the end, live and taped text excerpts from Smith's *Ghosts* adaptation, Smith sweeping dust and glitter off the floor with a broom, characters Regina, Manders, and Engstand played by inanimate toy animals, an oriental looking girl and a Frankensteinian monster. Brecht underlines how Smith combines horror, sexuality, and humor in an ambivalent movement that incorporates and underlines the queerness of the original play. This is an example of how Smith embraces and resignifies abjection.

Disincarnation is the performative practice of Smith's performance of *The Secret of Rented Island* in the sense that it juxtaposes the four concepts of character and thereby blurrs the boundaries between them. The Artaudian concept appears via the focus on the (disease-ridden) body. As Artaud describes it, victims "signaling through the flames" experience a heightened presence. Similarly having a disease – whether it be syphilis, the plague or HIV – brings a heightened attention to life. The Brechtian concept of character shines through in the use of alienation effects such as Smith forgetting his lines and correcting the other performers. The multiple drag character and elements from Fuchs' "literalization" represents elements from the postdramatic tradition. The classical concept appears in the sense that the scenic elements and the entire montage points in one direction toward Montez, her failed acting, and oriental looks, which creates cohesion. Disincarnation and the failure aesthetic also shine through in terms of

text representation. Smith disincarnates the text by working *on* the text – by rewriting the entire Strindberg play *Ghosts* and giving the play a new title: *The Secret of Rented Island*. Smith works *against* text representation by an abrupt presentation of the text. A type of disincarnation is at play because the disrupted and punctuated presentation of the text points to the materiality of the performer incarnated.

The Secret of Rented Island employs Brechtian alienation techniques such as anti-illusionary breaks; as previously described, Smith kept forgetting his lines and correcting the other performers to a humorous effect (Brecht 1978:160). Other humorous alienation techniques include Smith choosing a toy animal to play Regina and two toy monkeys to play Manders and Engstrand, all three on wheels, prerecorded lines; a stagehand girl wearing a harem outfit and a veil covering her lower face pulled them around and into their positions (Brecht 1978:158). Brecht further recalls how Smith "made no attempt to get the lines exactly right (…) he made no attempt to perform the character. His was the human voice, his presence the human presence. He was the hero" (Brecht 1978:160). Along the lines of Bertolt Brecht's characters, Smith does not fully transform himself into the character. What comes to mind is how Smith's performance is both Brechtian and Artaudian in the sense that the referral to Smith's "human presence," (a classic Artaudian performance rhetoric) is achieved through a dismissal of performing the character and the use of alienation effects. This confirms my thesis that R.A.T., performance theater, and classical acting share the same goal: to reach authenticity and presence. However, it is not the same truth, presence or authenticity that is at stake for Smith as for Strasberg or Artaud.

The themes of Ibsen's *Ghosts* such as sexuality, disgust, disease, and illness connect to the abject. The title "The Horror of Sex" is appropriate because Smith's re-performance underlines the ambivalent juxtaposition of sex and horror: Usually sex is considered pleasant and filled with enjoyment; however, it is connected to horror and death when it comes to sexually-transferred deadly diseases such as syphilis. Smith drives back and forth between physical performance (Artaud), emotional layers (Strasberg), and postmodern discursiveness (postdramatic). Let me explain. I argue that Smith embraces and identifies emotionally and bodily with the outsider Oswald and his unstable, abject body. Smith confirms this when he is asked by Bennett Theissen how he got the idea to do *Ghosts* and Smith says: "Oh, because I was worried about syphilis then. New diseases were being found out about, and I just identified with Oswald a lot" (Smith in

conversation with Theissen, 1982).[31] Smith amplified the abject bodies of the original play. For example, Brecht recalls how Smith, as syphilis-infected Oswald, often wore a glittering skull mask symbolizing death beseeching him and how, toward the end, Oswald was coughing out glitter that Mrs. Alving scattered over the stage as a symbol or sign of death by morphine (Brecht 1978:161). Smith's performance exhibits sign *and* body in the juxtaposition of beauty (glitter) and death (body). Brecht's description of another recurring horror element also amplifies the presence of abject bodies on stage: "the bandaged Frankensteinian monster behind the curtain" (Brecht 1978:173). Smith's performance is sign *and* body in the sense that he signifies how diseases such as syphilis (and HIV) turn their victims into Frankenstein looking monsters. Brecht also explains that Smith assumed Mrs. Alving was also infected by her husband's syphilis and therefore placed her body in a shopping cart from a supermarket because she could not walk. He also covered her disease-infected and pulverized face with a wig (Brecht 1978:158). Other nights, N.Y.U professor and critic R. Argelander portrayed Mrs. Alving as "some old drag queen" (Brecht 1978:158) pointing to the "monstrous" materiality of the performer. During the second week of *The Secret of Rented Island*, Mrs. Alving is no longer played by R. Argelander but by a little oriental girl. She wears a heavy black veil over her face covering her pulverizing face represented by a white facemask under the veil (Brecht 1978:170). The use of the veil in the performance is not only to cover up ravishing beauty, red lips, and sensuality: There is no unknown beauty revealed behind the veil; instead, disease and horror are revealed. The veil covers up disease. The sensuality of the mysterious veil is mixed with disease and horror.
The highlighting of an abject materiality in Smith's performance makes it more body but simultaneously more than body because the amplified abject bodies give voice to and embrace minoritarian bodies inviting us to reflect critically on the cuts we make between normal and abnormal. To examine this further, I turn to Michel Foucault's lectures *Abnormal: Lectures at the Collège de France 1974-74* (2003), where he describes how the monster is almost impossible to understand because it often presents itself as a mix of two domains, two species, two individuals, and two sexes that from nature cannot be mixed. The monster transgresses the laws of nature and does not abide by the laws of (Western) society. Therefore, the monster forces us to consider whether the laws of nature that are the foundation of our society are as natural as we

[31] "Mysterious Things." Conversation between Jack Smith and Bennett Thiessen, January 18, 1982. Accessed May 9, 2017:
http://semiotexte.com/?p=694

think (Foucault 2003:63-65). This is another example of how the abnormal opens up to questioning of the normal. Smithian drag characters mix two domains and mixing two domains presents an unstable, unfixed, anti-essential body or identity in variation à la Deleuze and Guattari. An active materiality is at play, as the drag characters exhibit a dynamic bodily presence forcing us to consider and question passive fixed categories, binary oppositions and the consequential power structures. As such, Smith's drag characters and the "abnormal" and "monstrous" body of both Smith and Oswald as subjects in between are sites of resistance and revolution.

In *The Secret of Rented Island*, the horror element is linked to sex and syphilis as "the price of humping" (Brecht 1978:177). It is almost as if Smith's portrayal of syphilis-infected Oswald foreshadowed his own HIV diagnosis and the entire upcoming AIDS crisis in the 1980s where HIV/AIDS became the price of humping or the representation of the horror of sex. HIV/AIDS as well as syphilis certainly "beseeches and pulverizes the subject" (Kristeva 1982:5). However, Smith resignifies the abject by humorously exaggerating and thereby punctuating the stigma and humiliation connected to sexually transmitted diseases.

Critique of Hollywood's orientalism and Western consumerism

Smith borrows from Artaudian performance with his shamanistic invocation of Montez and the universe of her films. Like many of Smith's performances *The Secret of Rented Island* could be described as a cross between a rehearsal and a private ritual and, like most of Smith's performances, it starts with the burning of incense adding to the ritualistic and oriental feeling (Stefan Brecht 1978:161). Simultaneously, Smith exhibits this invocation using Brechtian alienation effects such as speaking directly to the audience and staging himself as the master mind/director/sheik/shaman figure controlling the performance in another variation of the Smith-Montez-assemblage. The dominating signature of Smith's aesthetic is the mixture of trash and oriental elements, which is also characteristic of the set design for *The Secret of Rented Island*. Smith presents a new world characterized by a cross-cultural mix of the trash of the West such as an old Christmas tree and tossed out shopping carts and the stereotypical symbols of the East such as the veil (see images 12 & 13).

12 & 13. Jack Smith, Untitled (from *The Secret of Rented Island*), 1976-77 Copyright Jack Smith Archive; Courtesy Gladstone Gallery, New York and Brussels.

By mixing in trash, Smith disrupts and transforms Hollywood's pastel-colored presentation of the Orient. Smith's use of trash has a revolutionary energy to it because it transforms the stereotypical portrayal of the Other and the Orient into a new world where binary oppositions between the East and the West dissolves into new categories. In a mix of Christianity and Islam the pastor is referred to as Haroun al Rashid (Brecht 1978:168). Al Rashid was caliph of Baghdad and the leading character in *One Thousand and One Night's Tales* and the Montez film *Arabian Nights* (1944). Smith blurs the binary opposition between two large religions.

14. Jack Smith, Untitled (from *The Secret of Rented Island*), 1976-77 Copyright Jack Smith Archive; Courtesy Gladstone Gallery, New York and Brussels.

Smith turned trash into art because as he puts it, "Trash, is the material of creators" (Smith 1997:26-27). In *The Secret of Rented Island*, Smith juxtaposes glitter, dirt, and cigarette stubs dusted up off the floor (see image 14). The dirt and the cigarette stubs become almost beautiful when mixed with the glitter. The broom looks like a magical glittery broom that will sweep all your dirty sorrows and secrets away. The image portrays trash and glitter as equally beautiful in another Smithian positive take on trash. Stefan Brecht describes Smith's junk aesthetic further in "The Sheer Beauty of Junk" (1978) by presenting his experience of Smith's performance *Withdrawal From Orchid Lagoon*. The performance took place in Smith's loft, The Plaster Foundation, and was performed by Reptilian Theatrical Company. What caught Stefan Brecht's eye about the set design was a junk heap:

> A toilet with junk in it, including a crippled, perhaps headless doll. Old, small Christmas trees with hardly any needles left. Feathers, wire netting, a string of colored lights. A huge ladder with a net suspended from it goes up to a sleeping balcony. Smith ascends and descends several times purposefully, he arranges for some illumination of the junk heap (Stefan Brecht 1978:12).

Smith literally lights up the junk and up-cycles objects tossed out by capitalist consumers such as shopping carts and Christmas trees. As Walter Benjamin notes in his description of the surrealists in the essay "Surrealism: The Last Snapshot of the European Intelligentsia" (1978), Smith subscribed passionately to the idea about the "revolutionary energies that appear in the 'outmoded'" (Benjamin 1978:50). Smith utilizes the outmoded and the objects cast out of Western society to criticize capitalist production, consumerism, and the throw-away mentality of the Western consumer.

Disincarnation, the failure aesthetic and text representation

In *The Secret of Rented Island*, contrary to a classical coherent narrative à la Aristotelian drama within an enclosed stage illusion, Smith continuously breaks the stage illusion by performing variations or disincarnations of the text and the characters. Smith amputates conventional text representation through alienation techniques, failure, and confounding devices. Smith's use of text is characterized by the 'new literalization' described by Fuchs as well as Deleuzian variations on text presentation through pauses, forgetting lines and correcting the other performers. Let me present some examples. Stefan Brecht vividly describes a string of

"confounding" devices in *The Secret of Rented Island*. Brecht describes how, using an alienation effect, all dialogue except for Smith's lines were prerecorded on tape and played back during the show. In an anti-illusionary deployment of the "new literalization" technique, Smith read his lines of the pages of the script. Smith stages the reading off the script itself and as a part of this staging:

> Smith kept getting the pages mixed up, losing his place, he was fighting the paper, asking the assistants for page 12 (was provided with it), showing the queen in the cart the right place, - in one sequence this latter gave various lines previously given, you were suddenly in the wrong place in the play, Smith pretending to be lost ("What's going on?!") (Brecht 1978:157).

Brecht also explains how Smith corrected his fellow performers, telling them how to perform, where to stand, how to move, and so forth. Brecht explains how things kept going wrong or how something went missing, so Smith had to retrieve it. These confounding devices bring an unpredictability and dynamic bodily presence to the performance that creates suspense. It must have been impossible to predict the events of a Smith performance. Brecht's description of these meta-theatrical structures is hilarious, but he points out that he was the only one in the audience laughing; the comedy was lost on the rest of the crowd. Brecht writes:

> Like all good comedy, obvious comedy, - that you had to *think* to realize it was there: having set it up as something to keep one in stitches, Smith had strangulated it, - presented you with its corpse. No release in laughter. But this sublimation induced a secondary exhilaration: gave you an asphyxiation high (Brecht 1978:160-161).

Why celebrate failure? First, because the celebration of failure pierces through the representations, pointing to the materiality of the performer. Also, as Brecht notes, Smith strangled the humor, which gave Brecht an emotional release stimulated and brought on by abnormal breathing. These confounding devices and constant variations also contribute to a rehearsal-room aesthetic in Smith's work, which creates a room with a feeling that anything can happen. Smith even titled one of his performances *Rehearsal for the Destruction of Atlantis*. The failure aesthetic and a humorous confounding atmosphere of everything going wrong also characterizes Smith's performance in *What's Underground About Marshmallows?*:

> Uh…this is an intermission. Let's take a 10-minute break could we please. I was even in the middle of a story, but I'll try to remember where… I hope you don't mind… because there's already, you know, been enough good stuff already to compare with even the new – the latest hit – *Penguins of Penzance* (Smith 1997:138).

In a dry and self-ironic manner, Smith reviews his own performance and says that there will be a break so the audience has a chance to absorb all the "good stuff" that they already witnessed. The failure aesthetic is closely connected to Smith's anti-illusionist Reptilian acting style with its use of humorous meta-theatrical comments on classical character representation: "Oh… I just made a very good editing change. Uh, you didn't see the thing last night, did you? You see I'm cutting onions because it helps you weep at a dramatic moment" (Ron Vawter as Jack Smith in *Roy Cohn/Jack Smith*, Etchells 1999:91).[32] This is another example how Smith mocks and celebrates classical acting and an example of how Smith lays bare the constructed nature of theater: All the layers become visible, thus offering a critical and more authentic room.

A masochist aesthetic and the oriental

Disincarnation: Identities in variation

> *Normal Love*, Smith's 1963 feature-length film, is loosely based on horror movies, particularly from the 1930s and 40s, as well as the work of Dominican-born B-movie star Maria Montez.[33]

In *Normal Love*, disincarnation is at play as the film oscillates between nonverbal, Artaudian Dionysian bodily presence, Brechtian montage and alienation effects, and the postdramatic multiple drag subject. The classical element is the securing, revival, or reanimation of Montez.

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[32] In *Roy Cohn/Jack Smith* Vawter says: "Oh… I just made a very good editing change. Uh, you didn't see the thing last night, did you? You see I'm cutting onions because it helps you weep at a dramatic moment" (Etchells 1999:91).
The transcript of *What's Underground About Marshmallows?* from *The Writings of Jack Smith* says: "You see, you should have gone, because you saw this scene last night… (music with jungle cries) Uh, one of the secrets of great acting is that always to contrive to be chopping onions…in some uh, dramatic, moment, and uh… so I think I'll uh, start the onion soup now…" (Smith 1997:139). I attribute this discrepancy to the fact that the transcript is incomplete, and that Smith performed the piece with variations and to Vawter's interpretation.

[33] From the introduction to the exhibition: *Jack Smith: Normal Love* at MOMA PS1. July 7-September 17, 2012, Assistant Curator Christopher Y. Lew. Accessed May 9, 2017: http://momaps1.org/exhibitions/view/356


15 & 16. Jack Smith, *Normal Love* (film still), 1963–1965, 16-mm film (color). Copyright Jack Smith Archive; Courtesy Gladstone Gallery, New York and Brussels.

The entire film montage points to identification with Montez and exhibits direct worship of her when Mario Montez in a mermaid costume worships Maria Montez at an altar with an image of her lighting candles in her honor. The mermaid lives in a tub and is wearing a big oriental turban, lots of makeup and jewelry (see images 15 & 16). The reanimation of Montez adds a feeling of cohesion and consistency to the montage.

The title *Normal Love* is an ironic comment on heteronormativity. The film invades the senses with its color scale, bodies, nature, and depiction of queer love. The film was never finished because Smith swore not to do this after the trouble with *Flaming Creatures*. However, he screened parts of *Normal Love* from time to time. *Normal Love* follows the mermaid (Mario Montez) who lives inside in a tub and a group of people dressed in pastel-colored chiffon dresses and oriental turbans having a party outside in a forest. The soundtrack for the film is oriental music, songs in Arabic combined with Hawaiian hula music. The group in the forest is having a Dionysian feast with confetti, serpentine and veils hanging from the trees as they dance among the cows, drink pastel-colored drinks, sensually eat watermelons with their fingers, feed each other, and smoke weed. Several characters from horror films appear such as a mummy and a vampire/werewolf figure who disrupts the festivities attempting to rape some of the people in scenes that combine slapstick humor and horror. The film culminates in a dance scene where everybody gathers on a giant pink cardboard cake dressed in seashell bikinis, sarongs, and wigs; they belly dance, making it difficult to distinguish males from females. They are all shot down in a slapstick massacre by a bald Mongolian boy in a dress with a toy machine gun/water pistol and end up in a big pile on top of each other. The acting style is a both improvisational and filled with melodramatic theatrical gestures. The set design and props have a clear DIY aesthetic, and there is excessive use of fake jewelry, veils, and flowers (see images 17 & 18).

17 & 18. Jack Smith, *Normal Love* (film still), 1963–1965, 16-mm film (color). Copyright Jack Smith Archive; Courtesy Gladstone Gallery, New York and Brussels.

In *Normal Love* Smith subtracts elements of power from Montez's Hollywood films with a nonverbal, non-plot-based scenario in which Smith juxtaposes the idyllic (nature) with death (mummies and the massacre). A strong theme of the film is identities placed in continuous variation: are the performers male or female (transvestites), animal or human (werewolf and mermaid), living or dead (the mummy)? The characters as assemblage often seem to possess a Deleuzian infinite identity à la Alice from *Alice in Wonderland*: They are both at once, and stable identities are left behind; in other words, the bodily self is deconstructed, and a multiple subject is presented à la postdramatic character representation. Kristeva explains how abjection poses a threat to the subject because of its ultimate reference to the death of the subject. Bodily decay and death remind us of the deconstruction of our bodily selves, our materiality and mortality. Smith introduces the deconstructed and abject body in *Normal Love* through characters from outdated exploitation films and horror B films such as the mummy, the vampire, and the massacre on the cake at the end. Smith juxtaposes these abject elements with the idyllic nature, festive celebration, cakes, drinks, and pastel colors in a reversal of the pastel colored Hollywood's ideals of character representation, beauty, and storytelling. Smith's practice is filled with "monsters" drags, vampires, and mummies and Smith opens up to new possibilities with the monster. Smith exhibits numerous possibilities of bodily transmutations with his flaming creatures and, combined with the Dionysian feast, *Normal Love* is infected with Artaudian bodily energy. However, Smith punctuates this energy with Brechtian metafictional structures and slapstick comedy. As an example the mummy represents bodily transmutation and the possibilities of the monster. A mummy is a dead body that has been preserved artificially or naturally. However, in *Normal Love*, disincarnation is at play because a performer incarnates the

19 & 20. Jack Smith, *Normal Love* (film still), 1963–1965, 16-mm film (color). Copyright Jack Smith Archive; Courtesy Gladstone Gallery, New York and Brussels.

mummy while simultaneously exhibiting the constructed nature of the incarnation: The mummy is alive, and no naturalism is attempted, it is obvious that it is a person in a mummy costume. A person marked as mummy. The mummy parties with the others and tries to drink pastel colored cocktails, but the gauze gets in the way, which looks funny and thereby dismantles the horror of the mummy (see image 19). The film points to the fictional character of the film and a dynamic bodily presence in a humorous manner. Smith also juxtaposes horror and beauty with a creature in skeleton painted face and a wild, beautiful and almost Victorian style dress with excessive layers of fabric, a blond wig and a big hat. Is this creature male or female, dead or alive, horrific or beautiful, natural or unnatural? Smith keeps the viewer in suspense (see image 20).

In her article "TransMaterialities" (2015), Karen Barad argues that nature is not as natural as we think; nature is actually queer (Barad 2015:412). Barad explains that: "According to QFT [quantum field theory], perversity and monstrosity lie at the core of being – or rather, it is threaded through it" (Barad 2015:401). Barad exemplifies her argumentation by turning to electrons. She explains that electrons are cross-species in the sense that they are a mix of different virtual configurations spread apart over time and space dissolving various oppositions between, for example, past/present as well as natural essence (Barad 2015:401). Barad argues that monsters such as Frankenstein are promising and positive figures because they awaken new modes of embodying and queer agency as well as breathe life into a restorative politics of "monstrously queer possibilities" (Barad 2015:411). Barad points toward the promise of monsters in the way that they point toward new possibilities. Barad refers to a transsexual person identifying with Frankenstein: In "My Words to Victor Frankenstein above the Village of

Chamounix," Susan Stryker investigates the transsexual body as an unnatural body and draws a parallel between herself as a transsexual woman and the monster Frankenstein. Stryker encourages others to investigate their own nature. As Barad writes,

> [Stryker] speaks with razor-sharp directedness to those who would position their own bodies as natural against the monstrosity of trans embodiment: examine your own nature, stretch your own body out on the examining table, do the work that needs to be done on yourself (with all this charge's intended multiple meanings), and discover the seams and sutures that make up the matter of your own body. Materiality in its entangled psychic and physical manifestations is always already a patchwork, a suturing of disparate parts (Barad 2015:392-393).

Barad encourages us to examine and question what categories such as "natural" and "normal" represent. Barad suggests that we should take a look at ourselves and the cuts we make between the natural and the unnatural, normal and queer. Disincarnation is a practice that resembles a patchwork reanimating character by resuturing the four concepts of character into a character assemblage. We are constantly stratified by the conventions of a society that judges and decides what is "normal." Smith creates a BwO free from the oppressive norms of society – his creatures are in constant becoming in constant process of doing and undoing the seams and sutures that make up oppressive categories. Smith's flaming creatures wear a patchwork of elements from the different concepts on the outside exhibiting new and hidden layers and desires.

The horror of queerness

In the article "De ONDE bøsser," Mads Ananda Lodahl argues that there has been a connection between horror and queer characters on film for a long time.[34] According to Lodahl, it is the antagonists in particular who have been given queer attributes by filmmakers to make the male protagonist look more masculine in, for example, James Bond films. In horror films, queerness is often represented as sick and horrific, as Lohdahl explains: "Because who has a more sick mind (…) than the man who wants to become a woman?" (Lodahl 2015:4). Lodahl mentions characters such as Norman Bates in Alfred Hitchcock's *Psycho* (1960) and the transsexual

[34] Lodahl, title in English "The EVIL gays," 2015.

Buffalo Bill in *Silence of the Lambs* (1991). Lodahl also points to the portrayal in films of the horror coming from within queer characters in the form of suicide, AIDS, and stigmatization. The queer community has criticized the film industry for the lack of "sunshine" stories about queers and queer role models on screen; however, Lodahl argues that positive queer role models are important but that counter images are also important, and so are more credible and realistic portrayals of queer life that the queer community can actually identify with. In *Normal Love* Smith introduces and connects horror elements and queerness, but to what end? A performer introduces a vampire character with fake fangs and half mask chasing a girl, gesturing wildly with his arms trying to reach and attack her. The vampire is a threat to humans since they turn humans into animalistic vampires, which leads to the pulverization of the subject and stable identities. But the rape/attack attempt by the vampire fails miserably when the girl throws a cake in the vampires face and thereby dismantles the horror of the vampire. By dismantling the horror of the abject body, Smith seems to present us with several bodies and sexes that differ from the straight body/sex and they are all, including the straight body, equally scary/friendly. The performer disincarnates the vampire by incarnating the vampire while simultaneously exhibiting the constructed nature of the incarnation: After the failed rape attempt, the vampire must take off the mask and the fake cardboard teeth in order to wipe off the cake, which points directly to the fictitious nature of the vampire. Again, the construction of the film and the vampire is laid bare in a humorous manner; the vampire is nothing but a person marked as a vampire. With a Brechtian alienation effect, the vampire puts the mask and the teeth back on before returning to his character, which exhibits that the performer is not wholly transformed into the character. The "vampire" becomes a mask and an identity that one can put on and take off, thereby signaling dynamic bodily presence. Smith also resignifies the horror and abnormal by presenting the monster in a context (a beautiful and sunny forest) different from the usual gloomy and dark horror setting, which punctuates the stigma. Smith does not deliver a realistic portrayal of queer life. What he offers is a positive productive fantasy with a positive, and humorous perspective on and possibilities of the "monster."

The active materiality of the mermaid

One of Smith's recurring themes is the utopian world of Atlantis. Smith named his free theater at his private loft The Plaster Foundation of Atlantis and one of his performances *Rehearsal for the Destruction of Atlantis*. The inspiration comes from Montez's films, among others *The Siren of Atlantis*. Atlantis is a reference to a fairytale land described by Plato in Plato's dialogues

Timaeus and Critias. Atlantis was a country whose fine morals and laws were destroyed by its people's wealth. Zeus punished the people of Atlantis by making the island disappear into the ocean in a volcanic rupture.[35] Smith saw our world as a type of lost Atlantis destroyed by capitalism. Some say that the mermaid, a cross of two species, comes from the lost Atlantis. In this sense, the mermaid comes from a lost paradise.

In *Normal Love*, Smith's presentation of the human-animal assemblage, Mario as a drag mermaid, invokes a lost paradise in the forest and the entire film presents a Smithian version of a utopian paradise. The mermaid represents seduction, allure and divine feminine essence. So, what does it mean when we are presented with a drag version of a mermaid? It subverts the normative conception of a mermaid as divine feminine essence. Mario as drag mermaid is both male and female, both human and animal (double cross), and – in addition to this – the mermaid is believed to be a shapeshifter, being able to shift shape into full human form. Disincarnation represents exactly this kind of active materiality that moves around between centers throwing normative conceptions overboard. What does it mean that Mario in Maria mermaid drag worships Maria? The direct worship of Montez has spiritual connotations and makes me think of Maria Montez as a type of savior, saint, or Goddess that minorities pray to in the hope of bringing back the lost Atlantis as a place where all kinds of hybrids are welcome and considered beautiful, powerful, and spellbinding.

Disincarnation and the veil

Smith's use of the veil points to the materiality of the performer, and in this sense, a type of disincarnation is at play because the veil covers up the skin and the bodily materiality while simultaneously pointing toward it. Bodil Marie Thomsen explores the doubleness or crosswise arrangement of the chiasm of the sight/the visual chiasm: to see and be seen. When you watch a film, you take the thrilling position of a voyeur; the screen acts like a veil. When the veil appears on screen like in *Normal Love*, you become a voyeur in a double sense, which doubles the thrill. Thomsen points out that what is invested in this chiasm are the flesh or chair, in Merleau-Ponty's words, that is, the indecisive in the relationship between subject and object. Merleau-Ponty used the chiasm of sight to show how thought (mind) and seeing (senses) cannot be separated and are both active powers since what we see when we look at the world cannot be a pure sham. This

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[35] Carl Henrik Koch, Mogens Herman Hansen: Atlantis In *Den store danske*, Gyldendal. Accessed May 5 2007 from http://denstoredanske.dk/index.php?sideId=41530

was Merleau-Ponty's primary critique of the Cartesian dualism (Thomsen 1997:63). Thomsen describes how one of the magical and scary things about film is that the visual chiasm is disrupted because the images on screen do not look back at the audience (Thomsen 1997:67). The audience is invisible and anonymous to the actors on screen because of the absence of the visual chiasmic viewing exchange that ties together time and space (Thomsen 1997:71). Thomsen opens up for questions about the materiality of both the audience and screen performers, the presence vs. absence of the performer on screen and the flesh in the middle of the chiasm. Thomsen asks how a film seem to be both a real rendering or presentation of life and at the same time a fictitious representation, both living flesh and blood and image, and asks how we can fall in love with a film persona? Thomsen argues that it might have something to do with the fact that there is a connection between this doubleness of the film and the doubleness of the female (film star) who has become a metaphor for appearance and disappearance in Western culture (Thomsen 1997:72-73). In the chiasm of disclosure, to see, appearance, the unveiled vs. cover up, to be seen, disappearance, the veiled the body represents the relation (Thomsen 1997:74). Thomsen points to philosopher Mario Perniola who claims that film stars, models, and pin-up girls are simulacra's of the flesh or industrial slaves, living money. Thus, according to Thomsen, the film star represents the impossible fusion of presence and absence; in film media, the film star is only a virtual reflection, fictional flesh, a replica, or simulacrum (Thomsen 1997:74). Thomsen argues that the object is absent and double present in an accumulation of images, and it is in this accumulation and return of the same that the flesh in the shape of the fetish that the star is present (Thomsen 1997:75). There is an inherent erotic element to any film because of the disruption of the visual chiasm, and the star becomes the fetish of the films; they represent something absent and function as a sort of substitute for the chiasm of sight (Thomsen 1997:76). According to Thomsen, this doubleness of the female is thematicized from the early days of filmmaking through a focus on the female, masquerades, striptease, transvestism and the carnivalesque (Thomsen 1997:72-73). As Thomsen describes it: when we see, for example, a film or something behind a veil, the desire to look beyond the images and find the hidden meaning is produced (Thomsen 1997:73).

I will now analyze how Smith's use of the veil points to the active materiality of the performer: both the sheer physical surface of the body and the surface effects and its psychological depth. In this sense a type of disincarnation is at play because the veil covers up the bodily materiality and psychological layers while simultaneously pointing toward them. In *Normal Love*, Smith often films through a veil or films through the leaves and trees and bushes as if somebody is lurking around secretly looking at the people behind the trees, turning the leaves and trees and bushes

into a veil in themselves. By using nature and the veil this way, Smith disrupts the visual chiasm: to see or to be seen, and since the film media itself disrupts the visual chiasm, there is a double disruption at play for the audience who have to see through two screens. This calls attention to the surface but simultaneously creates a feeling of depth because it spurs the imagination and the desire to know what exists behind the screen and the veil. On one level, the surface effects such as the veil, the mask, and makeup produce depth because they point to what lies beneath the surface. In the forest, Smith uses the veil to transfix and spellbind the audience by speaking to our innermost deeply-felt fetishist desires when he lets us see the performers only through veils suspended between the trees. Behind the veils, we get a glimpse of beautiful drags engaging in erotic behavior. Here, the veil produces depth because it points to the activities behind it and sets off our imagination: What are these strange creatures hiding, doing, thinking, and feeling? Simultaneously, on another level, from a masochist aesthetical perspective, surface effects such as the veil, the mask, and makeup produce surface and seductions, and so forth and in that process ridicule or mock the wish for depth and the voyeuristic wish for "truth" and "meaning". Smith's use of surface effects produces surface and seductions especially by creating surface intensities. An example of this is found in *Normal Love* when Smith zooms in on the face of one of the drag performers. A veil covers the face and the drag performer tightens the veil around his face before the camera moves on. The surface of the veil covers the surface of the skin, and this act of surface upon surface creates an erotic intensity. Another example of this exaggeration of surface effects is found in a very erotic sequence of excessive surface and seduction where the face of the drag queen appears covered in a white veil, and the drag queen's red lipstick seems hyper sensual and inviting behind the veil creating an intensity of the surface. Smith's masochist alliance with Montez (as opposed to a misogynist voyeuristic desire and aesthetic) is reflected throughout Smith's practice through his playful use of veils and masks because these surface effects keep the audience in masochist suspense. There is a connection between the qualities of horror films, eroticism, fetish, and the veil since they all draw the audience in by working with basic human fear, desire, and curiosity around the unknown. Horror films and the veil use the unknown as an instrument to create an emotional response. We are simultaneously repulsed by and attracted to the unknown and the unknown creates thrill, suspense, fascination, and fear in the audience, especially through the hidden elements; it is scarier if we do not see the monster and sexier if we cannot see the whole face or body of a person.

Smith also uses the veil to mark a transition from the forest to the mermaid's tub. In the forest, the music changes to oriental music, and Smith cuts to a veil covering the screen. Slowly, we can see the contours of the mermaid behind the veil in the tub, and we are led behind the veil to the

21. Jack Smith, *Normal Love* (film still), 1963–1965, 16-mm film (color). Copyright Jack Smith Archive; Courtesy Gladstone Gallery, New York and Brussels.

mermaid. The veil makes the forest disappear and the mermaid appear in a seductive manner. The veil also underlines the exotic nature of the mermaid's home and the oriental feeling is further enhanced when we see that the tub is now filled with milk in which the mermaid bathes like Cleopatra (see image 21).

"The Memoirs of Maria Montez or Wait for Me at the Bottom of the Pool"

Smith's essay "The Memoirs of Maria Montez or Wait for Me at the Bottom of the Pool" is characterized by disincarnation because of its mixture of Artaudian presentation of materiality, Brechtian montage structure, and postdramatic simulacra. The classical concept shines through via the concrete bodily securing, and reanimation of Montez. The entire text montage points to Smith's identification with Montez as abject, adding a feeling of cohesion and consistency to the essay. Disincarnation also shines through via the bodily self as deconstructed or, in this case,

decomposed; however, the reanimation of Montez functions as a recurring theme. I interpret the essay as a material reanimation of Montez.

The memoirs of Maria Montez and the disincarnation of Hollywood

As Dominic Johnson points out, Smith was fascinated to the point of necrophilia with dead stars such as Montez. Smith cultivates the abject by cultivating a dead star. His fascination with Montez can be interpreted as nostalgia, a longing for the beauties of the past. However, Smith subverts the nostalgic longing, for example, in his essay "The memoirs of Maria Montez or Wait for Me at the Bottom of the Pool" (1997). The title suggests that Smith wrote a Montez biography/memoir. Memoirs are normally considered to be a collection of the author's autobiographical memories written in the first person about events in the author's life. Smith fails at writing a conventional biography or, more precisely, Smith is working on and against the conventional biography. Montez did not write her memoirs, Smith did, and not as a nonfictional biography but as grotesque fiction. Is this how he wants to remember her or wants the reader to remember her or is something else at play? I argue that he uses her body as an object or a readymade in the text, and a simultaneous fascination and critique of Hollywood shines through. Smith's grotesque fictitious Montez biography is set on an old Montez Hollywood film set and is a (Brecthian) montage of events on a film set divided into three scenes: Untitled, "The Take" and "The Pool". All elements of power are amputated from the film set: The cast is made up by a material assemblage of dead and half dead actors and actresses, and the set is in ruins, nothing works, everything is falling apart. The dead and half dead cast includes Maria Montez. Montez is not the only dead character on the film set: Florence Bates is also part of the cast, and the makeup lady, the only staff member left on set, tries to revive her.[36] Another half dead character is Charles who plays the leading man to Montez's leading lady. The failure aesthetic shines through not only through the use of old or dead actors but also through the shooting of a love scene even though "There's no indication that the camera is working" (Smith 1997:37) and despite the fact that "The chunk of putrid meat in the pool showed up in all the shots" (Smith 1997:37). On set the scaffolds have crumbled to ruins and others have been built on top but have also crumbled. Scaffold upon scaffold until no original is left: similar to Jean Baudrillard's postmodern simulacrum theory where image is put upon image in the mass media until no

[36] Florence Bates (1888-1954) was an American character actress. Her first big film role was in Alfred Hitchcock's *Rebecca* (1940), where she played Mrs. Van Hopper. After that, she appeared in a string of films often portraying the *grande dame*. Accessed May 9, 2017: http://www.imdb.com/name/nm0060904/?ref_=nv_sr_1

original exists. The original Montez Hollywood or scaffold is accessible only as simulacrum or as fragments and ruins of a bygone completeness, but it can still produce new meaning. The whole scenario bears a resemblance to an abandoned amusement park from a post-apocalyptic horror film when Smith writes: “The décor hangs down in tendrils and dust settles over all. There are strangled bodies hanging in the tendrils. They were the set decorators” (Smith 1997:38). Civilization is gone, maybe due to capitalist abuse of the planet resulting in some natural disaster, in Smith’s world where glamour, entertainment, and beauty are juxtaposed with death, ruins, and disaster in a Smithian disincarnation of Hollywood.

Smith opens the essay this way: “The dust settled. O finally! Maria Montez was propped up beside the pool, which reflected her ravishing beauty. A chunk fell off her face showing the gray under her rouge” (Smith 1997:37). If it was not clear to the reader from the title and the first few lines, it becomes clear in the third section that Montez is dead when Smith writes: “Who could stand the smell from her decomposed body” (Smith 1997:37). Thus, Smith confronts the reader with a corpse, Maria’s decomposed body, the bodily self as deconstructed. In a positivity of the abject body he juxtaposes beauty and death when he describes her as beautiful although she is dead and falling apart. Smith’s description of her dead body being “propped up” underlines his use of Montez’s dead body as a prop, an object, a readymade making Montez both body and sign. The effect of this use is both provoking since it is considered disrespectful to objectify the dead, but at the same time, I see it as a tribute to Montez since Smith argues that her ravishing beauty defies death and decay. Smith’s disincarnation reanimates Montez. Disincarnation connected to the material body shines through via Smith’s desire to absorb and integrate Montez’s material body while simultaneously deconstructing it by presenting it as dead and decomposing showing the construction of this integration and absorption. The line “A chunk fell off her face showing the gray under her rouge” is a reference to the made-up corpse, which reminds us of our materiality and mortality, and death as the ultimate limit. That a chunk of makeup falls off Montez’s face refers to the covering of the natural signs of death such as the gray/greenish color of the corpse that has been covered up to make the corpse look more fresh and alive, which seems grotesque. However, I argue, that it is a way for Smith to tell society and the symbolic order that it is not the abject that is perverse or unnatural on the contrary: the symbolic order of Western societies is perverse and unnatural in trying to close its eyes to death. The description of the chunk falling off is also tragic comedy as the makeup on the corpse has the opposite effect than the intended: it only makes the corpse look more artificial, not more natural. In the West, we hide the corpse as quickly as possible. In other cultures, death is not covered up and the status of the corpse is different. I argue that there is a masking an unmasking

of death at play in Smith's essay since applying makeup to a corpse is a way to mask death, and with the chunk falling off, Smith is unmasking death and questioning the cut between natural and unnatural, through the dissolution of the mask. Death is a large taboo in the Western world where the ideal is to look as young as possible for as long as possible. Some Western people spend large amounts of money on Botox, plastic surgery, and so forth to look young, and capitalism thrives on this. Death is not present in our daily lives; it is wrapped away perhaps because death is connected to the ultimate loss of control. For me, Smith is criticizing and unwinding the taboo by unmasking death. The seriousness of death is punctuated repeatedly by humor to a grotesque effect, for instance, when Smith wonders how to put back the missing chunk of flesh on Montez's cheek: "Best to fish the chunk out of the pool and pat it back into shape. It'll show as a blotch on her cheek but we can shoot around that" (Smith 1997:37). In my interpretation, this is also a critique of Hollywood and the film industry where images are manipulated endlessly to project perfection on screen. However, I do not believe that it is Smith's biggest concern to enlighten Western societies about death in order to reevaluate Western societies' relationship to death. Moreover, I propose that his main object and concern is to criticize the repression of queer, different, or non-normative bodies by the symbolic order. Smith calls attention to the huge repression project connected to the suppression of non-normative bodies. Today, this repression is closely linked to the challenges connected to representation of non-normative bodies from black to queer bodies in Western media.
The first scene ends with the set disappearing in shadows, scaffolding and Montez disappears along with it. However, the show must go on and they shoot the scene because, as Smith argues, "We just can't see her (Montez) but it'll come out on the film" (Smith 1997:38). In the second scene "The Take," Montez and the others are back on set. Montez is "wrapped in white gauzy-mers" (Smith 1997:38). Montez is wrapped in white bandage like a mummy or Butoh dancer and thus enters an assemblage with the mummy. More slapstick horror follows in the take when the makeup lady:

> stumbles and leaves a red smear across Miss Montez's mouth, then the mouth falls off. The rouge pot falls on set. Blend it out evenly! Don't stop the take. Miss Montez whips up a fan over her mouth for the rest of the take. She gets up and laughs in the leading man's face. He glows orange with makeup. The air around him is orange. His eyes swimming in adoration, follow her. He touches her veil as she sweeps past him. Orange smear. His arm falls off. The fat makeup lady runs in and puts it back as a shower of white flowers swirls down to create a distraction (Smith 1997:39).

Everything is going wrong in the take, failing, and everyone is falling apart. Nevertheless, Smith concludes: “Everything is going beautifully” (Smith 1997:39). Again, Smith reverses and rearranges conventional ideas and cuts between beauty and failure, the living and the dead, the natural and the unnatural.

The positivity of the material bodily principle

There is a focus on body openings in the essay. As an example, Smith describes how Charles has “strings going out of his asshole leading to everybody on the lot” (Smith 1997:37). Charles stumbles in Montez’s veil and “the pole is lodged in her cunt. O she’s all farted up now” (Smith 1997:37). The reference to concrete body openings such as the “asshole” and the “cunt” refer to the abject since they are linked to bodily fluids that seep from these holes such as urine and feces. These openings can be interpreted as openings towards entering an assemblage with others. Smith highlights the impure and improper, the abject, in a grotesque way using slapstick elements such as the old man stumbling in Montez’s veils causing the pole to get lodged in her vagina or by describing how somebody stepped on Montez’s face, so they had to restore her face with some of her leg. In this way, Smith uses the abject subversively by exhibiting the improper body and bodily self as deconstructed and decomposed in a grotesque and exaggerated manner. It almost becomes a BwO. The focus on body openings and exaggerations of the material bodily principle is a reference to Bakhtin’s theories on the carnivalesque, grotesque, and degradation of the higher. The contact with the earth and the body negates the divine, elevated, and high-minded but is at the same time the scene that produces new life (babies) and new positive meanings (Bakhtin 1984:20-21). The carnivalesque turns the world upside down in a temporary reversal of hierarchal rank, high and low, the king and the fool (Bakhtin 1984:10). These are some of the subversive elements in the carnival. Different genres and worldviews are allowed to come together in a polyphony of voices and a hybrid form. Through the carnivalesque and concrete bodily celebration of the abject, Smith subverts and opposes the official high-minded culture: the symbolic order.

An ethical-political take on disincarnation

Disincarnation is a mode of embodying where the bodily self as deconstructed points to the materiality of the performer itself reanimating the body and character. Smith’s disincarnation is also a mode of embodying that presents new ways of dealing and interacting with the unknown and the foreign in the shape of other cultures, minorities, nationalities, sexualities as well as new

ways of dealing and interacting with death and disease, in short, with the abject. Smith uses humor, glitter, and beauty to punctuate and resignify the abject and show its positive, productive potential. Smith turns monsters and minorities into heroes, trash into valuables, the poor into the rich. Disincarnation negotiates the BwO and the abject as positives or in positive terms presenting new categories and possibilities, which offers us new forms of ethics and thus they bear a political message.

CHAPTER 3: DISINCARNATION AND GENDER-CRITICAL STRATEGIES

From *Chapter 2* we learned from the disincarnaiton practice that traditionally opposing character concepts coexist. We also learned that the exhibition of the stage illusion does not exclude emotional identification and that a constructed and artificial frame does not exclude authenticity. Next, I examined how one of the side effects of Smith's disincarnation practice includes an embrace and resignification of the abject as a potential survival strategy for minorities. I also established that disincarnation implicates a political-ethical message and power regarding how we treat each other and the "trash" of our capitalist and heteronormative society.

Entanglement

Feminist theorists: The body, sexual difference and Deleuze and Guattari

In this chapter, I will argue that disincarnation represents an active materiality and argue for a gender-critical strategy in relation to Smith's practice that is not about privileging either a male or a female agent but about dissolving the classical gender model and calling attention to the nature of the body and materiality itself, a nature that is perhaps not as natural as we think. Some feminist theorists including Rosi Braidotti and Elizabeth Grosz (Grosz 1994:viii) have criticized male theorists such as Nietzsche, Merleau-Ponty, Foucault, Deleuze and Guattari for not taking sexual difference into account.[37] According to Grosz, the critique dates back to different

[37] In the introduction to her book *Nomadic Subjects - Embodiment and Sexual Difference in Contemporary Feminist Theory* (1994), Braidotti refers to Michel Foucault who describes how the poststructuralist questioning of the rationalist paradigm (the dualism between passion/reason, body/mind, feminine/masculine and so on) became known as "the death of the subject" or as a crisis in the logo centric subject (Braidotti 1994:46). Braidotti's critique of the death of the subject is related to female subjectivity "one cannot deconstruct a subjectivity one has never really been fully granted (...) In order to announce the death of the subject one must first have gained the right to speak as one" (Braidotti 1994:141). She points to the fact that women have not been granted subjectivity, which is also true for minorities at large. Braidotti describes how the rationalist paradigm can be traced back to the male model described by Aristotle as a model connected to rationality. According to Aristotle, women did not possess a rational soul, the feminine was thought of in terms of passions, emotions, and the irrational. This lays the foundation for the universal subject of knowledge as a rational, white, middleclass, heterosexual man, or in other words a phallogocentic subject (Braidotti 1994:79). This positioned the woman as *the other*, as the object to the male subject. Braidotti explains this further "The knowing subject has been shaken up, but it does not mean that all old notions -such as subjectivity, consciousness and truth -are no longer operational" (Braidotti 1994:141). In this way, the old works in the new. Braidotti also points out how different forms of (female) subjectivity are being explored today, such as Butler's performative gender constitution, Haraway's cyborgs, and others (Braidotti 1994:3). Like Butler, Braidotti is concerned with bodily matter/materialism (the embodied subject), and they both call the sex/gender dichotomy into question; however, Butler and Braidotti have two different points of critique. Braidotti disagrees with Butler's performative thinking and her positioning "sex" as a fiction. She presents the term *sexual difference* as an alternative to Butlers socially constructed "gender" but also because she believes that the neutralization of gender dichotomies is dangerous for women (Braidotti 1994:116) because it suggests symmetry between the sexes where there is none. In addition to this, Braidotti explains: "The rehabilitation of sexual difference opens the way for all other differences to be reconsidered: differences of race or ethnicity, of sexual preference, and so forth. Sexual difference stands for the positivity of multiple differences, as opposed to the traditional idea of difference as pejoration" (Braidotti 1994:239). To discuss the process for women of becoming-subjects, Braidotti has worked out a working scheme with three different platforms for women to work through the process of obtaining subjectivity. In order to do this, we must reflect on "difference between men and women, "difference among women," and "difference within each woman" (Braidotti 1994:158). She stresses that the stages can coexist (Braidotti 1994:159).

categories of feminist theorists fighting against patriarchal oppression and vary from egalitarian feminism to social constructivism.[38] Grosz asks if sexual difference is a necessary condition of our understanding of subjectivity? To answer this question, Grosz proposes a reconstruction of Deleuze and Guattari's understanding of corporeality from *A Thousand Plateaus* (Grosz 1994:161). Not many feminist theorists have used Deleuze and Guattari, only some such as Braidotti, Jardine, and Irigaray (Grosz 1994:162). However, according to Grosz, Deleuze and Guattari's theories can be useful since they question widespread assumptions about corporeality, identity, and relations between subject and object and:

> provide an altogether different understanding of the body (...) Following Spinoza the body is regarded not as an organically determined entity but in terms of what it can do, the linkages it establishes, the transformations and becomings it undergoes, the machine connections it forms with other bodies (Grosz 1994:164-65).

Here, Grosz notes that Deleuze and Guattari focus on the endless performative possibilites of the body as an open materiality capable of making infinite connections with others. However, the problem for Deleuze and Guattari, according to Grosz and other feminist theorists, is their term becoming-woman and that they pay no attention to the particularity of women and thereby neutralize women's (and men's) sexuality (Grosz 1994:163). Grosz takes issue with examinations of rigid binary gender models because she regards biology as an open materiality but still forwards ideas of taking sexual difference into account because "a position outside, beyond sexual difference is a luxury only male arrogance allows" (Grosz 1994: 191). In the following section, I will discuss this assumption.

Critical perspectives on Grosz's Deleuze and Guattari interpretation

Both Braidotti and Grosz are critical of Deleuze and Guattari for not recognizing sexual difference and the particularity of women because they see this recognition as an important ingredient in the process of turning women into subjects. My issue with Grosz and other feminist theorists is that they focus on women becoming-subjects and thereby speak from a classical

[38] Another category of feminist theorists includes Irigaray, Spivak, and Butler. They are interested in the lived body and reject the dualism between mind and body. They also question the sex/gender distinction. They believe in sexual difference whether cultural or biological (Grosz 1994:18). For these theorists, the body is far from passive: "The body is a cultural interweaving and production of nature (...) The body cannot be understood as a neutral screen, a biological *tabula rasa* onto which masculine or feminine could be indifferently projected" (Grosz 1994:18). One of the central questions Grosz poses is this: "Can depths, the interior, the subjective, and the private instead be seen in terms of surfaces, bodies, and material relations?" (Grosz 1994: 160).

gender model. This differs from Deleuze and Guattari's project that takes into account that the queer and the nomadic subject are not only about the female agent; moreover Deleuze and Guattari aim to get away from the subject and become all sorts of other things. I will also point out that changes have happened since 1994 where Grosz and Braidotti wrote respectively *Volatile Bodies* and *Nomadic Subjects*. Today, minorities demand representation politically and otherwise to a larger extent. Grosz accuses Deleuze and Guattari of paying no attention to the particularity of women. However, this can be seen a self-contradictory accusation since the theories of Deleuze and Guattari transgress stable ideas and images of subjectivity and the body as well as ideas about a stable sex and classical binaries between humans and animals and so forth. The sex is simply one facet out of many of the image of the body. Grosz's and other theories on sexual difference are stuck since they, in the end, are anchored in biology. Grosz also seems to forget that becoming-woman makes all other becomings possible and therefore is an entrance to men becoming women, queers, transgendered people, and so forth. Deleuze and Guattari suggest that all becomings go through becoming-woman because the girl is not part of the Oedipal triangle (mother-father-son) where the phallogocentric subject is the subject to which all other configurations are other making men subjects and women objects. According to Deleuze and Guattari:

> The question is not, or not only, that of the organism, history, and subject of enunciation that oppose masculine to feminine in the great dualism machines. The question is fundamentally that of the body – the body they steal from us in order to fabricate opposable organisms. This body is stolen first from the girl: Stop behaving like that, you're not a little girl anymore, you're not a tomboy, etc. The girl's becoming is stolen first, in order to impose a history, or prehistory, upon her. The boy's turn comes next, but it is by using the girl as an example, by pointing to the girl as the object of his desire, that an opposed organism, a dominant history is fabricated for him too (Deleuze and Guattari 1987:276).

I take from this quote that the girl has a special status for Deleuze and Guattari because she is the first to be deprived of her body by social and historic discourses. Deleuze and Guattari are interested in the body itself and the body as well as desire is not defined through lack but through their positive productive ability to make infinite connections and enter into assemblages with others, things/bodies, and not in predefined (gender) categories. Deleuze and Guattari argue that precisely because there is no Freudian model for how the girl can become subject within the

order of society, the girl can be a field of possibilities for transformation. So, all becomings go through becoming-woman because becoming is a state or status outside the predefined categories, outside (the fiction about) the stable (static) subject. Only those who are excluded from the stable categories can become something non-predefined/prefigured, which only exists in the concrete specific configuration.

The vampire and the many sexes

Smith is excluded from the stable heteronormative category as a homosexual therefore he can be something non-prefigured. Smith's use of the vampire enhances this potential and taps into an alliance between vampires and male homosexuals that, according to Lodahl, have been cultivated due to a comment in Bram Stoker's novel *Dracula* (1897) where Dracula tells a group of female vampires to get away from Jonathan Harker because Jonathan is "his." The sexual ambiguousness of the vampire also shines through in Deleuze and Guattari's theories about the vampire; they use the vampire as an example of the existence of many sexes and beings by pointing to propagation by contagion by vampires as opposed to propagation through hereditary reproduction by heterosexuals. The difference is that the contamination, infection or epidemic involve heterogenic terms or hybrid forms, for example, of a human, an animal, or a bacteria, and "these combinations are neither genetic nor structural; they are interkingdoms" (Deleuze and Guattari 1987:242). These interkingdoms are far from hereditary reproduction, the only difference in hereditary reproduction is the opposition between male and female whereas for Deleuze and Guattari:

> There are as many sexes as there are terms in symbiosis, as many differences as elements contributing to a process of contagion. We know that many beings pass between a man and a woman (…) they cannot be understood in terms of production, only in terms of becoming. The universe does not function by filiation (…) These multiplicities with heterogeneous terms, cofunctioning by contagion, enter certain assemblages; it is there that human beings effect their becomings-animal (Deleuze and Guattari 1987:242).

In-between beings are best understood in relation to becoming and outside stable categories. I argue that the implications of Smith's use of the vampire figure resonates with Deleuze and Guattari's use of the vampire to show that transvestism, female impersonation, homosexuality, and sexuality in general are not explained very well by binary opposition of the sexes or by Freudian diagnoses. Smith's disincarnation of Montez and monstrous beings in between bodies –

mermaids, vampires and mummies – express an active materiality and becoming that we are unable to control.

Beyond representationalism: Barad's entanglement theory

Karen Barad's new materialist theories further the understanding of disincarnation and the status of the body inside the Smith-Montez assemblage: Barad supplements Deleuze and Guattari with her special account of matter's dynamism and performative materiality in her book *Meeting the Universe Halfway Quantum: Physics and the Entanglement of Matter and Meaning* (2007). Barad's entanglement theory is useful in understanding disincarnation since entanglement forwards ideas about the inseparability of materiality and emotional layers, dynamic bodily presence, and a fluid identity. Barad's project is to show that matter is agentive by exploring how the material and the discursive relate to each other. Barad argues that representationalism does not trust matter and thinks that it needs "the mark of an external force like culture or history to complete it" (Barad 2007:133). She asks how language became trustworthier than matter. (Barad 2007:132). Barad agrees with the Danish physicist Niels Bohr's rejection of representationalism, and as feminists, poststructuralists and queer theorists such as Deleuze and Guattari, Butler, and Foucault (Barad 2007:47) before her, Barad argues that we should think beyond representationalism. Representationalism corresponds with the traditional realist belief in a one-to-one correspondence between scientific theories and reality (Barad 2007:41). Representationalism assumes that representations mirror the represented (Barad 2007:48). Barad uses Bohr's quantum physics to show that this is not the case. Through his experiments within quantum physics, Bohr discovered that when we measure quantum objects they change (Barad 2007:106). Measuring represents the object together with the apparatus, both the object and the apparatus; they are interrelated. As such, there are no separate entities, no dualisms; everything is entangled and therefore inseparable (Barad 2007:67). To recognize this inseparability, Barad introduces the term intra-action.[39] Why intra-action? Because interaction refers to the prior existence of separately determinate entities meeting each other and then interacting whereas intra-action corresponds with the motto of quantum physics: "We are a part of that nature that we seek to understand" (Barad 2007:67). This is how we are to understand Barad's rethinking of the

[39] For Barad: "A phenomenon is a specific intra-action of an 'object' and the 'measuring agencies'" (Barad 2007:128). Newtonian physics does not account for this sort of discontinuity, but Bohr proved that what characterizes quantum physics is this "essential discontinuity" or "quantum jump" (Barad 2007:108). According to Bohr there simply is "no unambiguous way to differentiate between the 'object' and the 'agencies of observation'" (Barad 2007:114).

term “agential realism.” Agential realism refers to humans as part of nature (Barad 2007:88), which dissolves the dichotomy but not necessarily the differences between nature/culture, science/nature.

The agential cut

Barad wonders: When everything is entangled how do we differentiate between anything? She suggests through the enactment of agential cuts. Barad explains that “The boundaries and properties of component parts of the phenomenon become determinate only in the enactment of an agential cut delineating the ‘measured object’ from the ‘measuring agent’”(Barad 2007:337). Thus, a temporary separation or cut is made which enables us to include something and exclude others from our consideration. In “Intra-actions,” (Interview of Karen Barad by Adam Kleinmann) (2012), Barad explains how dichotomies come from certain cuts such as the Cartesian cut between subject and object, which still stands relatively unquestioned (Barad 2012:77). Barad wants to question these cuts and find out how these differences are made:

> Agential realism does not start with a set of given or fixed differences, but rather makes inquiries into how differences are made and remade, stabilized and destabilized, as well as their materializing effects and constitutive exclusions. Since cuts are understood to be enacted rather than given (it is the cut that makes the individual and not the other way around) all manner of questions regarding the nature of mattering come together here – that is, questions of matter in the multiple senses of meaning, being, and valuing (Barad in Kleinmann 2012:77).

As such, agential realism urges us to question how cuts and differences are made and reminds us that we are responsible for the cuts and differences we make, especially the ones between “me” and “my” surroundings who have become forces of habit and thereby normative cuts such as the cuts between animals and humans, black and white people, crazy and normal people, culture and nature, object and subject, human and non-human. However, these cuts are not final or fixed; they can be enacted and changed again and again. What art can do is show that these normative cuts can be enacted differently. In the following sections, I will analyze how Smith challenges normative gender cuts.

Disincarnation in *Flaming Creatures*

Flaming Creatures (1963) was filmed on the roof of Windsor Theatre on the Lower East Side. The film was immediately forbidden due to its pornographic elements and queer bodies. The film is a brutal attack on the senses. As Artaud intends it, the film "disturbs the senses' repose, frees the repressed unconscious, incites a kind of virtual revolt" (Artaud 1958:28). However Smith does not go full Artaud he breaks the sensual dream with Brechtian jumps and breaks such as *tableaux vivants*. With a reference to the universe of Montez's films, *Flaming Creatures* starts with a voice saying: "Today Ali Baba comes! Ali Baba comes today!" which calls out Smith's flaming creatures. The film falls in three parts: *lipstick*, *rape orgy*, and *the dance*. In the first part *lipstick*, Francis Francine appears in drag costume: dress, hat, long glows, wig and flowers in her hand. She meets a girlfriend, a woman with a fan, and they start putting on lipstick sensually. Several flaming creatures join them and they put on lipstick while shaking each other's genitals. We see closeups of lipstick and beard. Then the first *tableau vivant* of the film appears with three creatures posing. In the second part *rape orgy*, Francis Francine and the other creatures throw themselves at the woman with the fan simulating a rape of the woman in a big orgy that ends in all the creatures nodding off from exhaustion (see image 22). The third part *the dance* starts with a coffin with a drag vampire inside. Wearing a wig with flowers in its hands, it starts dancing. The drag vampire gets out of the coffin and starts dancing. It awakens the others and dances with them. The dance is interrupted by two other *tableaux vivants*. Returning to the dance, a handwritten sign appears with the words: *The end*. The film has the look of an old black and white silent film.

In *Flaming Creatures*, disincarnation and the character as assemblage shine through in the traffic between Artaudian bodily intensity, Brechtian montage and alienation effects such as *tableaux vivants* and voice over, and the postdramatic multiple subject in the form of the various drag subjects and distorted images of bodies almost scattering the body. An element from the classical tradition is that the montage is anchored in a Montez universe, which creates consistency and common ground.

22. Jack Smith, *Flaming Creatures* (film still), 1962–1963, 16-mm film (black and white, sound) Copyright Jack Smith Archive; Courtesy Gladstone Gallery, New York and Brussels.

Entanglement blurs bodily boundaries

The entangled bodies of the rape orgy scene remind me of Barad's description of the brittlestar. Barad uses the brittlestar as an example of how Cartesian dualisms and agential cuts are differently enacted in nature. Barad notes how brittlestars can teach us about biomimesis. The brittlestar does not have a brain but its whole body consists of light-sensitive nerves or optically advanced "eyes/lenses." The brittlestar cannot separate materiality and intelligibility or a knowing subject from the materiality of the outside world; the two are intertwined (Barad 2007:375). The Cartesian dualisms collapse. This corresponds to body and process being intertwined in disincarnation. When we look at the brittlestar, "The agential cut between 'self' and 'other' (e.g. 'surrounding environment') is differentially enacted (e.g. in one agential cut, a given arm is part of the former; in another it is part of the latter)" (Barad 2007:376). This is an example of how the brittlestar represents an ongoing reworking of bodily boundaries. Another example is that a brittlestar can change its coloration in response to the available light in its

23. Common brittlestars. © Paul Kay / gettyimages.com

surroundings (Barad 2007:375). In addition to this brittlestar species challenge some sexual conventions such as the heteronormative regime, the standards of reproduction, and the dualism between male and female by exhibiting great diversity in sexual behavior and reproduction; some show sexual dimorphism, some are hermaphroditic, and others are self-fertile (Barad 2007:377).

The brittlestar serves as an image of the rape orgy scene in *Flaming Creatures*. According to Artaud, the audience should be whirled into a dream "in which his taste for crime, his erotic obsessions, his savagery, his chimeras, his utopian sense of life and matter, even his cannibalism, pour out" (Artaud 1958:92). This type of Dionysian raging is very descriptive of the rape orgy scene: When Francis Francine throw himself at the woman with the fan and the rest follow, it is almost as if they eat her alive in a theatrical, exaggerated and comic manner, the scene is very carnal with them eating off her, close-ups of breasts shaking, and many of the creatures masturbating. In the rape orgy scene, the viewer is presented with a pile of male and female bodies engaged in different sexual activities. Their bodies are completely entangled. It is very difficult to distinguish the body parts from each other. You cannot determine with any certainty which leg or arm or breast belongs to whom. Sometimes, some bodies look like they have both

24. Jack Smith *Flaming Creatures*. Copyright Jack Smith Archive; Courtesy Gladstone Gallery, New York and Brussels.

breasts and a penis. They all look like one big changing organism, similar to a brittlestar. With the rape orgy scene Artaud's fantasy comes alive: "Every spectacle will contain… cries, groans, apparitions, surprises, theatricalities of all kinds" (Artaud 1958:93) (see image 24). The rape orgy scene is a sensual attack and the strong and theatrical images, gestures, and sounds produce an emotional and also physical response.

In the rape orgy scene, the disturbance or shaking of identity becomes literal and amplified through the shaken images. Smith's drag creatures are abject because they disturb identity and normative gender roles by being in-between, ambiguous; it is difficult to distinguish males from females. The brittlestar and the orgy scene both question our normative perception of gender categories, dissolving normative agential cuts between male and female, mind and body, materiality and discursiveness and create new configurations, categories and new ways of performing the body. The rape orgy scene is an example of sexual dimorphism or polymorph perversity, which expresses itself through a blurring of the lines between half-naked male and female, cross-dressing, and androgyny bodies. The orgy scene is the most explicit example of the

montage on a material level in Smith's practice. The drag characters can also be described as material montages in and of themselves. The brittlestar and the rape orgy scene both question our normative perception of gender categories by creating new configurations and categories which corresponds to Barad's thoughts on the issue:

> Ethics is about mattering, about taking account of the entangled materializations of which we are part, including new configurations, new subjectivities, new possibilities – even the smallest cuts matter. Biomimesis is not about making copies but about enacting new cuts and reconfiguring entanglements (Barad, 2007:384).

Smith's practice represents this kind of new ethics-production via the establishing of new categories and possibilities and new ways of performing the body.

Dissolution of the classical gender model

The theories of Deleuze and Guattari do not rest upon a dichotomous opposition of masculine and feminine subject oppositions as Braidotti also points out. She concludes that the ultimate aim for Deleuze and Guattari is "to achieve not a sex-specific identity but rather the dissolution of identity into an impersonal, multiple machinelike (body without organs) subject" (Braidotti 1994:116). However, Deleuze and Guattari and Barad focus on desire beyond gender and sexual difference in their theories on becoming and entanglement. For both Deleuze and Guattari and Barad, the body is in constant process, transformation, and moves around between centers. The body cannot be separated from its surroundings; the body is entangled with the world. Smith's practice and disincarnation presents this kind of active materiality by constantly moving around between centers such as male and female. The effect of the rape orgy scene is an image of one big organism: an impersonal, multiple machinelike organism. Put differently, that organism may be described as an active dynamic materiality where the opposition between masculine and feminine is blurred through cross-dressing, intertwined naked bodies, confusion of genitals and a play with androgyny bodies, all questioning our common conceptions of gender categories and identity. For good reasons, Smith could not usurp the real Maria Montez, so he settled for Francis Francine as stand-in, thereby activating a queer strategy and a split from the original; Francine is a man and Montez a woman. When Francis Francine disappeared midway through the recording, Mario Montez took over his role. This was unproblematic for Smith since gender/actor consistency in character representation was unimportant to Smith. As Morris points

out, “In reformulating his treasured favorites from the catacombs of Hollywood – in this case Maria Montez’s *Ali Baba* – he tosses out all manner of good sense and logic, paving the way for others to do likewise after him” (Morris 2000:2). In this way, Smith clears a path for new ways of performing (gender) and questions the cut between the perverse and the normative. The exhibition of a polymorph perversity led to the censoring of *Flaming Creatures*; however, one could argue that this is absurd since we all, to some extent, refuse one established identity and authority and therefore all should be considered perverse.

The abject body

In *Flaming Creatures* Smith cultivated and transformed the pseudo-exotic universe of Hollywood’s escapist melodramas starring Montez into his own artistic strategies by obstructing the elements of power in the films with amateur performers, distorted images, and a non-linear and non-plot-based story. As Morris describes it:

> Smith’s own standards for art let him refashion Montez and the whole ethos of tinny Orientalia, low-budget intrigues, and what he called Universal’s ‘cowhide thongs and cardboard sets’ into Dionysian revels that were both wild camp and subtle polemic in upsetting an overflowing apple cart of norms: heterosexuality, narrative, social and sexual and aesthetic repressions (Morris 2000:2).

Let me present an example of how Smith upsets the norm. As a way of working on and against normative Hollywood, Smith is fascinated and inspired by Hollywood’s escapist melodramas. However, he simultaneously uses the escapist melodramas to expose Hollywood’s universe and methods such as gender and race stereotypes. As an example, in *Flaming Creatures* a social discourse related to gender representation is punctured with the body when a man applies lipstick. This has complex implications since it punctures the normative social discourse of women wearing makeup, not men. A whole group of half naked people is putting on lipstick and we see a close-up of one person’s penis resting on the shoulder of a drag with a fake nose putting on lipstick. While we see these images, we hear voice-over’s discussing how a man gets lipstick of his cock and how a man is not supposed to get lipstick on his cock. Lipstick is supposed to stay on the lips (see images 25 & 26). The homoerotic atmosphere of the scene and the abjection connected to the homoerotic by heteronormative society is embraced and punctuated with humor

25 & 26. Jack Smith, *Flaming Creatures* (film still), 1962–1963, 16-mm film (black and white, sound) Copyright Jack Smith Archive; Courtesy Gladstone Gallery, New York and Brussels.

exhibiting a different way of dealing with the abject that reveals new categories and possibilities. This is an expression of Smith's positive productive carnivalesque humor, through the degradation from lipstick as a cultural mask to the lower bodily regions, Smith unmasks cultural masks and boundaries. The naked body should not be shown in public according to the symbolic order – especially not the genitals – it threatens the symbolic order: Borders between the proper and the improper are blurred and transgressed, and the materiality of the performer pierces through the representation. *Flaming Creatures* is a strange and wondrous study in active materiality, abject sex, and desire.

The rape orgy scene combines comedy and horror by juxtaposing cheerful music and the horrors of rape. The intense rape orgy scene culminates in everybody falling on top of each other. A veil is blowing in the wind in the foreground, marking the transition to the last part of the film, the dance. This part starts with a coffin. The lid on the coffin is lifted from within and a vampire/zombie transvestite appears with the white turned out in its eyes, a wig, and flowers in its hands to the sounds of church bells and cheerful music. The vampire/zombie transvestite starts dancing and touching the others. The vampire/zombie dances with one of the others and soon others join the dance. The dance can be interpreted as a dance of the dead if we interpret the rape orgy scene as culminating in the death of the creatures, both real death and the little orgasmic death. The vampire/zombie transvestite then resurrects them, turning them into fellow zombie/vampires and dancing partners. The vampire/zombie transvestite points to the abject and the bodily self as deconstructed: to our material mortality and dynamic bodily presence. The film exhibits an active materiality in which the body is both male and female, both dead and alive, in

other words: in constant process, transformation and becoming. The body is brought to a nomadic state characterized by movement and change whose purpose it is to continue to move around between centers moving and living in transitions.

Disincarnation: Materiality and discursiveness twist into each other

For both Deleuze and Guattari and Barad, materiality can be thought together with a subject in constant change. I find that the theories of Deleuze and Guattari, as well as Barad and other technoscience feminists such as Donna J. Haraway and Elizabeth Grosz, add a different dimension to discussions of the relationship between the body and its surroundings. The theories of Deleuze and Guattari and Barad are useful in examining Smith's model of the body and the character since they offer process-oriented models where materiality and discursiveness twist into each other. For Deleuze and Guattari materiality is not identical with a static essentialism but can be thought together with a subject in a state of constant change. Becoming transgresses the opposition we find between body and process in discourse theories. Discourse theories focus on language, the social, and culture but forget to include the body, which is what Barad tries to make up for by granting materiality its own agency.

Smith enters an alliance with Montez he becomes her. In Barad's terms they are entangled which makes it difficult to separate him and his practice from Montez's. Smithian disincarnation synthesizes seemingly opposing forces and experiments with difference and questions several normative cuts. Smith produces new configurations of gender by dissolving normative agential cuts between male and female. The body in Smith's performances and films becomes "an assemblage" a collection of elements that are infinitely transformable. Becoming transgresses the opposition between body and processes of change because the body creates changing material relations.

Disincarnation: Leitmotifs revisited

Let me bring my analysis to a close by picking up on disincarnation in relation to the leitmotifs sketched out with *The Beautiful Book* in *Chapter 1*. To recapitulate, the leitmotifs are a renegotiation of the harem, the use of veils and flowers, the strut of the neck gesture, and distorted images.

Historically, the harem, practiced within Islam, is the part of a household for women only. The harem dates to the old Egyptian kings where the king had a harem of women from whom to choose. They took turns sleeping with him. The harem is a private place where only the husband,

relatives, and boys prior to puberty can enter. Aesthetically, the harem would usually have a courtyard with fake lakes, exquisite fruit, lush plants and flower art: all in all, a reflection of an Islamic paradise. The Western conception of the harem is orientalist and connected to something mysterious, immoral, and daunting. It is also connected to gender separation and the suppression of women.[40] Much of Smith's work can be interpreted as a kind of utopian harem, especially for the creatures in *Normal Love*, *Flaming Creatures*, and *The Beautiful Book*. In addition to this, Smith also turned his private loft into an Arabic courtyard and filled it with his harem of drag creatures and audience members with him as the Egyptian king presiding over the harem. However, a false misogynic, imperialism, patriarchism, and orientalism is at stake because Smith's fantasy harem is so excessive, theatrical, and queer that it turns both Western ideas about the Orient as well as the suppression of women in Islam against themselves. Smith disincarnates the harem and paves the way for sexual liberation and an active materiality thinking beyond gender and focusing on the character and the body as assemblage.

The use of flowers in Smith's practice comes from the harem aesthetic. Flowers have a lovely *doubleness* to them that sits well with Smith's disincarnation practice because they are equally appropriate for festivities and funerals thereby exhibiting the both-and nature of disincarnation. Smith drives back and forth between male and female, beauty and horror, celebration of life and death, dissolving binary oppositions, conjuring up new categories. In *The Beautiful Book*, the flowers act like a veil distorting and covering up bodies. In *Flaming Creatures*, the flowers serve as a metaphor for the creatures: the creatures represent an active materiality as they bloom in the orgy scene only to wither and die and bloom again when the vampire resurrects and reanimates them. The scene can be seen as if the creatures deflower the woman with the fan; perhaps they do not deprive her of her virginity, but they at least deprive her of her innocence.

[40] Kurt Villads Jensen, Lene Kofoed Rasmussen: harem In *Den store danske*, Gyldendal. Accessed May 5 2017 from http://denstoredanske.dk/index.php?sideId=89013

27 & 28. *The Beautiful Book*, 1962 © Jack Smith Archive Courtesy Jack Smith Papers, Fales Library and Special Collections, New York University and Gladstone Gallery, New York and Brussels.

The strut of the neck gesture, gliding or tossing the head back gesture is found in *Normal Love*, *Flaming Creatures*, and *The Beautiful Book* and symbolizes persons who are proud of themselves and their body. I view this as a type of Brechtian *gestus*. In Bertolt Brecht's theory *gestus* is connected to gesture and attitude and can be an embodiment of an attitude. *Gestus* dictates the attitude of the play to the audience, and for Bertolt Brecht, the attitude is political (Jestrovic 2006:113). This is also true for Smith. In *Normal Love*, the mermaid struts her neck back. In *Flaming Creatures*, the person with the fake nose puts on lipstick while strutting the neck back. In *The Beautiful Book*, Francis Francine and Mario Montez in Maria Montez drag do the same (see images 27 & 28). In these cases, I interpret the strut of the neck as an outer rendition or articulation of the emotional response to the social and political suppression of queers. They exhibit the attitude: We are not ashamed of our bodies and sexuality, we embrace the abject with a smile, we live joyously, we will not be suppressed, we walk tall and are confident and proud. In short, we strut like queens! In the photograph for *I Was a Male Yvonne de Carlo for the Lucky Landlord Underground*, Smith does not strut the neck but bears a similar attitude. With the Brechtian *gestus* the body is celebrated in its drag multiplicity while the oriental harem aesthetic anchors the collage of images in *The Beautiful Book*, *Normal Love* and *Flaming Creatures*.

Distorted images

Smith's use of the veil, the use of flowers as a veil, as well as distorted/veiled/disguised images produce seductions by creating surface intensities. In all of Smith's films, the failure aesthetic is apparent in the distorted images. Smith often fails to film properly and present the viewer with clear images. The images are muddy, distorted, shaken, and converge. The distorted images technologically and dramaturgically bear a resemblance to a haptic visuality, a masochist suspense aesthetic, and the figure of the rhizome as a model for the production of meaning. The images become haptic, as opposed to an optic visuality.[41] An optic visuality focuses on depth whereas a haptic visuality is linked to the sense of touch, sensing the tactility and details of the surface. The haptic bears resemblance to a masochist aesthetic that goes up against classical Hollywood working from a more optic visuality. I interpret the distorted images as haptic compositions that compose an alternative (to the optical) way of seeing and understanding the composition (cf. Riegl, Deleuze, Thomsen). This corresponds to Maurice Merleau-Ponty's notion of the flesh of the world, where seeing helps constitute touching and vice versa. Seeing and touching, the visual and the material, are the same.

I argue that the distorted images often act like a veil distorting "meaning" and "truth" about what is really happening, creating alternative agential cuts, asymmetrical patterns, and deviations from reality. Smith makes the audience become co-creators of the work and its meaning. A strong feeling of masochist suspense arises because we cannot see clearly what is happening. The patterns and details Smith creates on the surface produce new meaning and the various surface effects have a rhizomatic character as a rooting that stays at the surface of the earth. No matter the medium – photograph, live performance, film or text – the images, the performance, and the text become a body: the body as, in Deleuze and Guattari's terminology, a collective, or pack (not a family) seeking others.[42]

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[41] In his book *Late Roman Art Industry* (1985), art historian Alois Riegl distinguishes between an optic (long-sighted) and a haptic (short-sighted) visuality.

[42] According to Deleuze and Guattari, "The origin of packs is entirely different from that of families or States; they continually work them from within and trouble them from without, with other forms of content, other forms of expression" (Deleuze and Guattari 1987:242). As such, Deleuze and Guattari define the pack or collective in opposition to a family. As a group or formation or crossing of collective assemblages, the pack or collective disturb the family.

CHAPTER 4: DISINCARNATION PAST AND PRESENT

With *Flaming Creatures* as the center piece, *Chapter 3* unpacked how the disincarnation practice includes the entanglement of mind and body, male and female, discursive and material. Similar to the brittlestar the character as a material assemblage presented in *Flaming Creatures* produces new and more inclusive cuts and categories dissolving traditional binary oppositions. Jack Smith was not the first to present gender performances on stage or to perform an assemblage aesthetic. *Chapter 4* traces gender performances and the assemblage aesthetic back to what one could call Smith's predecessors' in the avant-garde. Next, *Chapter 4* argues that disincarnation is the performative practice of contemporary performance theater.

Smith's predecessors' in the avant-garde

In this chapter, I present the androgynous figure of Marlene Dietrich as she developed in relation to Josef von Sternberg, Marcel Duchamp's Rrose Selavy gender performance, Gertrude Stein's assemblage with Alice B. Toklas and interrupted narratives, and Elsa von Freytag-Loringhoven's trashy art assemblages and gender performance as Smith's predecessors in the avant-garde.[43] They share an abject assemblage aesthetic and a deviant sexuality or queerness.

The French artist Marcel Duchamp (1887-1968) is known for his ready-mades and is commonly constructed as the father of postmodernism – a position that is ironic and problematic regarding Duchamp's consistent critique of the patriarchal logos of Western art. How Duchamp may be regarded as one of Smith's predecessors in the avant-garde becomes especially evident in his alter ego Rrose Sélavy. Rrose Sélavy is activated when Duchamp, a male artist, represents himself as female in a gender performance. According to Amelia Jones in *Postmodernism and the En-Gendering of Marcel Duchamp* (1994), Duchamp dresses up as a woman and calls himself Rrose Sélavy for the first time in 1920 in a series of photographs by American photographer Man Ray (1890-1976) (Jones 1994:147). Both Duchamp and Smith present a multiple drag subject through the appropriation of external feminine features such as hair, makeup, dresses, jewelry, and hats to bring forth a political critique of heteronormativity and capitalism. According to Amelia Jones, Man Ray's Rrose photos have political implications and can be interpreted as direct parodies of the commercials of the time, eroticizing women to sell

[43] Sternberg's Dietrich films are a part of mainstream film culture; however, they are aesthetically in line with several characteristics of the avant-garde.

products, and presenting women as objects for the male desire/gaze (Jones 1994:162-163). A simultaneous fascination and critique of commercials, capitalism, Hollywood, and the mainstream superstar is another thing Smith's Montez-disincarnation and Rrose have in common. However, Duchamp is not becoming-Rrose. Contrary to Smith, Duchamp shaped his female alter ego, other self, or alternative personality himself together with Man Ray. Smith did not shape Montez. Montez was an autonomous person from the beginning, whereas Sélavy was not Sélavy, however, becomes an autonomous person, "a complete second ego," " an independent other" (Jones 1994:159) when Duchamp signs some works in her name. Another difference between Smith's and Duchamp's practices is that Smith juxtaposes the chic and the monstrous (such as beautiful dresses and decomposing bodies), whereas Rrose Sélavy is primarily chic, although the mere gender blending has uncanny, abject effects in a stable, heteronormative culture.

Amelia Jones' agenda in *Postmodernism and the En-Gendering of Marcel Duchamp* (1994) is to dissolve the understanding of Duchamp as the father figure of postmodernism. In the chapter "The Ambivalence of Rrose Sélavy and the (male) artist as 'only the mother of the work,'" Jones' overall argument is that Duchamp's adaptation of feminine attributes and his play with subjectivity and authorship is characterized by ambivalence in relation to the mixture of the traditional male/female poles and its resistance toward erotic images of women. On the one hand, the adaptation can be read as if Duchamp as a male artist has the guts to pose as female, granting him even more authority and making his agenda misogynistic. However, it can also be characterized as a resistance toward the authoritative construction of "Duchamp" as a well-known (father) figure since female impersonators and drag queens are linked to a low status by a normative society (Jones 1994:147-150). Jones refers to psychoanalyst Parveen Adams who argues that we do not either identify with or sexually fantasize about a male (active) or a female (passive) position as Freud would have it. Rather, we swing between the two, it is a mutating system, and we all possess active and passive instincts (Jones 1994:150-151). Adams argues: "An identification with one implies an identification with the other" (Adams in Jones 1994:151). Jones draws a parallel between this and the ambivalence connected to Duchamp/Sélavy because Sélavy mobilizes this liminal field.

In a similar way to Duchamp, Smith has been constructed as the father of performance art. For example, Laurie Anderson calls Smith "The Godfather of Performance Art" (Anderson in Jordan, 2006). Charles Ludlam proclaims that "Jack is the daddy of us all" (Ludlam, 1971 in Stefan Brecht 1978:28). Contrary to this construction, I argue that Smith dodges the risk of becoming the founding father figure of performance art. Smith avoids becoming the great

signifier in Jacques Lacan's sense because Smith not only flirts with the deconstruction of female objectification like Duchamp, he goes much further. Smith does not simply represent himself as female like Duchamp does. In Smith's practice, a disincarnation is at play since he presents himself as bi-gendered, dress and beard. However, even Duchamp's female impersonation turns into something more radical, a kind of disincarnation, when Sélavy becomes an autonomous person. One could argue that Duchamp disincarnates Sélavy with her signature, since the signature institutes a completely new subject constellation of Duchamp becoming-woman.

Josef von Sternberg's films featuring Marlene Dietrich are a central source of inspiration for Smith. According to Bodil Marie Thomsen, Marlene Dietrich (1901-1992) had her breakthrough around 1931 when she challenged Greta Garbo as the most excellent star of the times (Thomsen 1997:187). Dietrich's androgynous looks and man-eater characters associate her with the new self-sufficient woman of the 1920s and help deconstruct the objectification of women. However, it was a male figure, Sternberg, who shaped her, timed her, and taught her how to count to 50 before an important line. As Giesela von Wysocki points out, "The presentation of her body obeys a precise choreography," that of Sternberg (Thomsen 1997:189). Duchamp shaped and formed Sélavy by transferring something feminine to a male subject, and Sternberg shaped and formed Dietrich by transferring something masculine to a feminine subject. Duchamp made a personal bodily investment in Rrose: In Duchamp/Rrose's case, the performer is the artist. Sternberg is a more traditional author of Dietrich's star figure but there is also a kind of merging of director and actor at play. Smith's practice, however, is not about transferring something feminine or masculine onto the opposite sex. As opposed to Duchamp/Man Ray and Sternberg, Smith did not play the part as the author of or architect of Montez. Hollywood and the star system were the authors of Montez; they shaped the Montez star as mask or icon. Smith's practice is about becoming-Montez and best understood through Deleuze and Guattari. He was chasing her his entire adult life. *She* shaped and formed *him*. She is the author of Smith. In this way, Smith's Montez-disincarnation grants her authority.

Gertrude Stein (1874-1946) activated several of Smith's strategies. Sarah Bay-Cheng in her book, *Mama Dada: Gertrude Stein and Avant-garde Theatre* (2005), confirms the influence of Stein in Smith's practice. Bay-Cheng writes, "Stein was also a major influence in the work of the New York underground cinema in the 1960s, including Jack Smith" (Bay-Cheng 2005:119). In her analysis of *Flaming Creatures* (1963), Bay-Cheng points to the rejection of a linear plot for a "Steinian interruption and discontinuity" (Bay-Cheng 2005:123). I argue that Gertrude Stein opens up toward an entangled assemblage identity through her assemblage with Alice Toklas,

which may also be seen as a prerequisite for Smith's disincarnation of Montez. An example of this is Stein's book *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas* (1933). Stein is citing Miss Toklas in *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas*. She is creating her own literary and public figure through Alice, by making Alice the narrator. In doing so, Stein merges their identities, making it hard to distinguish the two. They become entangled or enter an assemblage. In *Everybody's Autobiography* (1937), Stein extends this democratization of her voice to everybody, which suggests that everybody is entangled in a material assemblage.

Dada artist Elsa von Freytag-Loringhoven (1874-1927) made art from trash she picked up from the street, turning abject trash and discarded materials into art long before Smith (Gammel 2002:4). Freytag-Loringhoven is known for her poetry, self-images, gender play, and assemblage art such as *Portrait of Marcel Duchamp* (1920), which is an assemblage sculpture made of trashy objects. Gammel refers to Alan Moore's description, which is also befitting of much of Smith's art: "Her best-known sculptures look like cocktails and the underside of toilets" (Moore in Gammel 2002:12). Freytag-Loringhoven's gender performance, cultivation of the abject such as smelly bodily fluids, for example, sweat, flamboyant persona and radical acting out of the life/art assemblage also point toward Smith's practice.

This section examined Smith's predecessors in the avant-garde: Marcel Duchamp, Josef von Sternberg, Gertrude Stein, and Elsa von Freytag-Loringhoven. Previously, the dissertation has also addressed some of Smith's inheritors in the avant-garde, in particular: Andy Warhol and Ron Vawter. The connecting thread in the practices of Smith's predecessors and inheritors is that there are various levels of disincarnation at play in the transgression of gender norms. Elsa von Freytag-Loringhoven, Ron Vawter, and Jack Smith also share a muddy, trashy abject expression whereas a more pure or clean abject expression shines through in Marcel Duchamp's and Andy Warhol's practices; however, they share the same political goals: to criticize heteronormativity and capitalism and point to new agential cuts and positive possibilities.

Aspects of disincarnation in performance theater

In the following, I present disincarnation as an analytical tool that gives a more nuanced understanding of character representation in American and European performance theater.[44] I

[44] Fuchs labels a branch of American experimental postmodern theater artists emerging in the 1970s such as Robert Wilson, Richard Foreman, and The Wooster Group as performance theater. During the 1980s and 1990s, new branches of performance theater emerge inspired by the latter: a branch in America and one in Europe. Most of these artists and groups appeared after Fuchs wrote *The Death of Character* (1996), but they carry on the torch of performance theater. I will name a few representatives: In America, Elevator Repair Service (1991), Richard

argue that disincarnation supplements the notion of performance theater from the 1960s until today as pure deconstruction or dissolution of the classical character by revealing a reworking of bodily presence, emotional layers, and the character as assemblage in performance theater. Disincarnation points to a post-performative self that includes and transgresses the performative self: incarnation and deconstruction in the same movement. Looking at performance theater through the lens of disincarnation allows us to see more clearly that neither Fuchs' multiple subject nor the bodily self as deconstructed exclude "speech, voice, character, self, presence" (Fuchs 1996:90), or emotional layers. On the contrary, in performance theater, dynamic bodily presence and emotional layers converge and pave the way for radical political implications. They disagree on postmodern/postdramatic terminology, but both Fuchs (1996) and Lehmann (2006) argue that the representation of a psychological character is deconstructed in performance theater. According to Fuchs and Lehmann, the embodiment of character is deconstructed, but not the body. Lehmann writes that the postdramatic is not about representation but the presentation of selves, bodies, and physicality à la Artaud and Grotowski. Lehmann holds on to the body as (absolute) presence. As Lehmann writes, "The present actuality of the body's visceral presence takes precedence over the logos" (Lehmann 2006:145). Both Fuchs and Lehmann keep the body as a site of inscription. However, following the logic of Grosz's Möbius strip and disincarnation, the inscriptions on the body, the surface effects and so forth lead to the inside; the physical leads directly to the psychological. Disincarnation shows that, side by side with the multiple subject, parts of the psychological character live on in performance theater, which is overlooked in the theories of both Fuchs and Lehmann.

Disincarnation: the performative practice of performance theater

The character as assemblage as well as the recirculation of B films forms a clear connection between Jack Smith and performance theater. Disincarnation shines through in performance theater via the traffic between the four concepts of character: the classical, Brechtian, Artaudian, and the postdramatic: In performance theater the multiple subject on stage is split and

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Maxwell's The New York City Players (1996), The Builders Association (1994), and Nature Theater of Oklahoma (2003).

In Europe, Forced Entertainment (1984) emerged in Britain. In Germany, Frank Castorf and Thomas Ostermeier, and from Institut für Angewandte Theaterwissenschaft in Giessen René Pollesch (graduated from Giessen University in 1989), Rimini Protokoll (2000), She She Pop (1998), and Gob Squad (1994) emerged. Belgian Need Company and Norwegians Vinge/Müller. In Denmark Hotel Pro Forma (1985), SIGNA (2001) and Fix and Foxy (2006) are strong representatives of performance theater. Outside America and Europe, Teatro de los Sentidos led by Columbian director Enrique Vargas is also well known for its participatory performance theater. These artists and groups mentioned above are still active today.

deconstructed via anti-illusionary breaks, for example, Brechtian montage and alienation effects, postdramatic use of technology such as video projection and voice manipulation and so on, and performative use of text twists into new notions on Artaudian bodily presence. The merging of the bodily and the discursive paves the way for a revival of elements from the classical character resulting in a reanimation of character. An example of this traffic between character concepts is Robert Wilson's productions where different concepts of character twist into each other: The artificial, Brechtian, and formalistic universe does not oppose authenticity, emotional identification, or inner depth as it does in classical acting. Rather, the artificial, the explicitly staged body and surface effects are seen as a path to the authentic emotional identification and depth.

The disincarnation practice and performance theater embrace B films because of the amateurish performances and because of the centrality of the body in many B films, especially the abject or sexually deviant body.[45] The abject body points to a multiple subject *and* physical presence granting the body agency which drives the point home that bodily presence characterizes Smith's practice and disincarnation, but not a static or essentialist bodily presence, rather, a dynamic bodily presence in constant change and process. Becoming has a special status in Smith's practice, but The Wooster Group and performance theater generally also present an anti-Oedipal subject, identities in variation, and an active materiality.

Disincarnation: Postdramatic, Artaudian, Brechtian, and classical elements

Fuchs uses The Wooster Group to exemplify the death of character. According to Fuchs, the character is split and dissolved through technology, literalization, speech-distancing devices, and lines spoken in an exaggerated manner. However, I argue that these elements point to the materiality, presence, and emotional layers of the Wooster performers and thereby stimulate renewed activity reanimating character. Let me explain. The four concepts of character converge in the practice of The Wooster Group. As I pointed out in my article "Teknologien som

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[45] Artists and groups such as The Wooster Group, Gob Squad and René Pollesch reenact and comment on B film material. For example, the underlying current and plot of the Pollesch trilogy from 2004 *Telefavela*, *Svetlana in a Favala*, *Pablo in der Plusfiliale* (*Pablo in the Plus*) is taken from the Latin American soap opera. The recirculation of material from mass media shines through, for example, in the The Wooster Group's reenactments in *House/Lights* (1999) of excerpts from melodramatic B films such as *Olgas House of Shame* and Mel Brooks' *Frankenstein*. The abject body is recirculated and reecacted via the sexually deviant and devilish Olga and the Frankenstein monster. The abject body is also present in performance theater through the reenactment of dead superstars' performances by Burton, Sedgwick and more. The queer body and the dead body can be described as non-normative or abject bodies. The non-normative body is not fixated or stable or pure it exhibits a dynamic bodily presence.

Medspiller: The Wooster Groups Hamlet" (2008), Elizabeth LeCompte works with a multiplicity of methods to create her unique directorial style. LeCompte says, "I'm working with many different kinds of training and ways of performing on the stage and all of them are equally wonderful to me. I don't value one over the other, I value performance, I value the stage" (LeCompte in Arratia 1992:121, in Tranholm 2008:61). What are the implications of this traffic between methods? The effect of the traffic between the different techniques becomes disincarnation; a character assemblage that includes dynamic bodily presence and emotional layers. In The Wooster Group's *Hamlet* (2007), the performers reenact a (failed) recording of an old theater version of Shakespeare's *Hamlet* with superstar Richard Burton in the title role from 1964. Richard Burton had a vision to bring theater to the masses and arranged for the theater production of *Hamlet* to be recorded and distributed and shown in cinemas around America. However, theater is hard to capture on film, and the recording was a flop. Scott Sheperd, who is playing Hamlet in the Wooster production, discovered the recording and found Burton's failed project mesmerizing and, therefore, brought it back to the stage. The Burton production is played back on at huge screen in the back, and the Wooster performers' reenact/incarnate the Burton performers down to the tiniest detail. Disincarnation shines through as the playback of the Burton production lays bare the constructed frame of the Wooster performers' reenactment and creates a double representation of the characters from *Hamlet*. With the exhibition of the Wooster performers reenacting the Burton production, technology is used to create a clear anti-illusionary break which is enlarged by montage and alienation effects when the Wooster performers ask the technicians to stop the Burton tape and play something back or fast forward, or speak directly to the audience, sing a song, comment on the Burton production or show and reenact other film versions of *Hamlet*. The Wooster performers even have several TV screens playing the Burton performance, which they look at from time to time to make sure they are in sync. Brechtian montage and alienation effects and postdramatic use of technology split and deconstruct the body; however, everything points toward the Burton performers' *Hamlet* representation, which anchors the performance and creates consistency and a common task to solve. Remediation twists into the material and emotional layers: There is intensity to the precise physical reenactment where every gesture, movement, and blink of the eye is carefully reenacted that expresses a desire to bring out the essence of the Burton performance in an attempt to honor and resurrect both the Burton performance, the recording of the performance, Burton as an actor, and the other now dead performers from the 1964 production. To take on a gesture is a way to feel it and the Wooster performers feel the Burton performers in a double immersion of the Burton performers and Shakespeare's characters: The Wooster performers, Burton performers,

and Shakespeare's characters enter a material assemblage that reanimates character, points to the materiality and presence of the performer, and contrary to Fuchs' theories, reinforces "speech, voice, character, self and presence" (Fuchs 1996:90).

The Wooster Group's Burton reenactment has a number of political implications. The reenactment exhibits the constructed nature of image production of the media. For example, when a character dies, such as Polonius, the dead body is frozen on a plasma screen – while a few minutes later the actor playing Polonius rises from the dead and walks out of the stage, pointing to the materiality of the performer. This makes us question the images presented on screen in the Wooster production and points to the fact that we are usually in the media only shown situations from one perspective. Another implication is the exhibition of a distinct bodily presence: not an essentialist or fixed bodily presence but a dynamic bodily presence, an active materiality: a montage on a material level.

Rimini Protokoll: the real and the theatrical

The hunger for bodily presence and authenticity in postdramatic theater is satisfied through authenticity effects such as "real" spaces or "real" people. In *Experts of the Everyday. The Theater of Rimini Protokoll* (2008) Miriam Dreysse and Florian Malzacher unpack the work of German performance theater trio Rimini Protokoll: Helgard Haug, Stefan Kaegi and Daniel Wetzel. As opposed to The Wooster Group, Rimini Protokoll has not one director or charismatic leader but functions as a collective. Rimini Protokoll does not have a trash assemblage aesthetic, but they examine the relation between the real and the theatrical. According to Dreysse and Malzacher, the trio has been working together since 2000 when they presented *Crossword Pit Stop* starring four elderly women presented as race car drivers. The women were not actors but "real people" cast as themselves, elderly women. The juxtaposition of old women and race car drivers allows us to look at death and the prospects of growing old from new perspectives and gain new insight into elderly people and the proximity to death. Casting real people has been the trademark of Rimini Protokoll ever since. Usually in theater, actors are staged, positioned, represented as real people; however, in reality theater real people are staged. This begs the question: What is real and what is theatrical? (Dreysse and Malzacher 2008:8-10). The uncertainty becomes a part of the dramatic suspense. This dramatic suspense is characteristic of Smith's self-presentation in *What's Underground About Marshmallows?* where Smith complains: "But the worst of all is that nobody thinks I'm acting…or that I'm not a great actor…or even an actor… at all. Or that this stuff isn't even acting" (Smith 1997:139). Why

would anybody doubt whether Smith is acting? Because his performance draws on his personal experience while he is wearing a costume. Smith mixes two categories confusing the boundaries between them: the real and the theatrical. Smith is both actor and non-actor. In the chapter "Making an Appearance, On the Performance Practice of Self-presentation" from *Experts of the Everyday*, Jens Roselt describes a Smithian disincarnation scenario in relation to the practice of Rimini Protokoll:

> Rimini Protokoll places you amongst all the opposing theatrical theories that exist. The most obvious of which appears with the question of what these real people on stage should be called. Actors? Performers? Players? Amateurs? Or experts of daily life? (Roselt 2008:47).

This is an example of how hard it is to speak about life outside or in-between the established categories. The disincarnation practice is at play in this "oscillation between categories" (Roselt 2008:47). According to Dreysse and Malzacher, real people are cast primarily as "experts of their own life" (Dreysse and Malzacher 2008:8). The everyday experts are present on stage for a reason: to share their expertise and knowledge (Malzacher 2008:23). For example, to talk about what it means to grow old. The productions of Rimini Protokoll are based on the everyday experts and research material. The everyday experts are put into a narrative made up by Rimini Protokoll (Dreysse and Malzacher 2008:10). The everyday experts are placed in a representational framework where they are both themselves and playing a role similar to Smith in *What's Underground About Marshmallows?* Again, this mix of "real people" and a fictional framework blurs the boundary between the real and the theatrical, the lived experience and the pretended. In the performances of (both) Rimini Protokoll (and Smith), the experience of being old (or a tormented homosexual artist) is close *and* distant at the same time, thereby creating openness and room for critical reflection about the parts and the people of our society that are often overlooked (Dreysse and Malzacher 2008:10). It also creates drama and suspense: In reality TV, and the celebrity culture it is very difficult to distinguish between the staged and the authentic, which makes the drama stronger. Elderly women, truck drivers, Indian call center workers, Vietnam soldiers bring authenticity and presence to the work of Rimini Protokol while the staged frame creates a distance that makes room for critical reflection and helps break down myths about, for example, the elderly and truck drivers and gives these people a voice.

Everyday experts invoke emotional identification and presence

Tue Biering and Jeppe Kristensen lead the Danish performance theater duo Fix & Foxy. Fix & Foxy's performance *Pretty Woman a/s* (2008) is a reenactment of the Hollywood melodrama *Pretty Woman* (1990) directed by Gerry Marshall. To perform the role of the lead character Vivian Vard, Fix & Foxy casts and pays a new real-life sex worker every night. Disincarnation of Julia Robert's Vivian portrayal is at play since the constructed frame of the Vivian incarnation is exhibited: The movie is played back on TV screens and together with an actor playing Richard Gere's Edward character the sex worker reenacts the movie. The sex worker was fed her lines through an earphone, and then repeats the lines. The Artaudian bodily presence of a real-life sex worker at the center of the performance twists into Brechtian alienation effects: a guide who guides the audience through the performance helps the sex worker with the earphone, the costume and directions about where to sit and stand. The sex workers built their performances upon external sources and surface effects: the earphone and the costume as opposed to professional psychological inside out acting. However, the outside twists into the inside since the body, surface effects, and the outside in approach to acting pave the way for the audience's emotional identification. As Fix & Foxy dramaturge Jeppe Kristensen explains about the audience response to a real sex worker on stage: "It obviously was very violent for them, what they experienced" (Kristensen in Gade 2009:108, my translation). The material body twists into emotional layers through the real bodies on stage because the audience has the knowledge that – unlike Julia Roberts – the sex workers have the bodily experience of a sex worker, which awakens strong emotional identification and affective response from the audience. The emotional travels across the body of the sex worker in the production. The body, surface effects, and outside-in approach pave the way for emotional identification. In *Pretty Woman a/s*, a Smithian political Hollywood critique and subversive use of the superstar is at play: In the performance, the melodramatic Hollywood universe is cultivated with its salmon-colored interior decorations, favorizing of heteronormative love and family life as the key to happiness and the foundation of Western culture. However, the show's overinvestment in this universe and the contrasting real-life sex workers present a strong critique of these values and the Hollywood **f**ilms' glorification of the "happy sex worker." Similar to Rimini Protokoll, the productions of Fix & Foxy give voice to minorities normally invisible in society. In reality theater, the presence of "real people" on stage increases the audience's level of emotional identification and immersion into the people on stage because these bodies do not pretend, as Smith puts it.

Material performer-participant assemblage invokes emotional identification

Artaud expresses a wish for the dissolution between the stage and the auditorium, "We abolish the stage and the auditorium and replace them by a single site… a direct communication" (Artaud 1958:96). Artaud and Smith are predecessors of today's participatory theater, performance and performance theater. In this section, I examine how Smith's disincarnation practice is useful for a better understanding of contemporary participatory performances.
I participated in the seminar *Participant-Based Stage Art* at Teater Momentum in Odense, Denmark, March 7, 2015. The main attraction at the seminar was British/German theater collective Gob Squad. Gob Squad is known for their participatory performances where they set up a constructed frame for real interaction between performers and audience. Danish director Erik Pold interviewed Gob Squad members Sean Patten and Sarah Thom about their practice over 20 years and about Gob Squad's performance *Western Society* (2013).[46] Gob Squad functions as a collective and does not have just one director. Patten and Thom explain that the Gob Squad members are not professional actors but come from different backgrounds in arts and academia. The audience must participate in order to help the amateur performers of Gob Squad solve the problem of the text. The process of making a performance starts with a concrete task that needs to be solved. The task of *Western Society* was to reenact a YouTube video with people from the audience. Thom and Patten explain that a concrete task and the constructed frame open up pockets of intimacy and make it possible for the participants to "let go" and really participate. Patten and Thom emphasize that the willingness to take risks is important for both the performers and the participants. Thom mentions how the possibility of failure is greater in participatory theater because the performers cannot predict how the participants will act and react here and now on stage. Patten explains that they like this unpredictability, uncertainty, and risk of failure because it creates suspense if the performer is not comfortable or hiding behind representation. For Patten, this vulnerability is real drama and real dramatic action (Patten and Thom in interview with Pold 2015). This plays into how the failure aesthetic heightens the attention of audience and performer and invokes dynamic bodily presence.

[46] In this section I refer to Erik Pold's oral interview with Sean Patten and Sarah Thom. A brief documentation of the Seminar including a short summary of the interview can be found in the report "Rapport fra seminar om deltagerinvolverende scenekunst på Teater Momentum den 7. Marts 2015." ("Report from the seminar *Participant-Based Stage Art* at Theater Momentum in Odense, Denmark March 7.") Accessed May 10, 2017: file:///Users/metterisgardtranholm/Downloads/Deltagerinvolverende_scenekunst_seminar_rapport_Momentum_marts_2015%20(1).pdf

Gob Squad uses Andy Warhol's film *Kitchen* from 1965 as the starting point for their 2007 performance *Gob Squad's Kitchen (You've Never Had It So Good)*. In the performance Gob Squad rewrites, reenacts, disincarnates, and comments on Warhol's film *Kitchen* from 1965 starring superstar Edie Sedgwick, as well as other Warhol films such as *Eat*, *Sleep* and *Screen Test*. The set up for *Gob Squad's Kitchen* (and *Western Society*) is similar to other Gob Squad performances: there is a big screen on stage where the actors appear and everything projected onto the screen is live. Gob Squad uses (four) volunteers from the audience as stand-ins for the amateur superstar performers in the film *Kitchen* by guiding them via headsets. The Gob Squad performers feed the lines to the participants, which they then repeat. In a double take on the superstar the participants are thus positioned as superstars. The Gob Squad performers play, like Smith and Warhol's "superstars," "themselves," and then again not quite.

At the seminar, I ask Patten and Thom how and why they work with a staged and constructed frame if the goal is realness or authenticity? Thom says that she does not know what authenticity means anymore because it is a slippery term. Patten explains that they work with authenticity *through* the artificial. Patten also notes that they find amateurs or non-performers more real than proffesional actors. This bears a close resemblance to Smith who preferred unschooled non-actor stars because they are more authentic than "convincing" actor stars. To make the exchange between performer and audience work, Patten and Thom explain how they, as performers, need to create an environment of trust. If they do this well, magic can happen, and authentic exchange and meetings can take place. Thom describes an example of such a meeting: One night during the run of *Gob Squad's Kitchen*, Thom had created a special connection to one of the participants, and they ended up kissing in a magical and emotional moment, and everybody was very moved by it (Thom in interview with Pold). This is a very concrete example of how performer and participant enter a material assemblage with emotional implications.

In Laura Luise Schultz's interview with Bastian Trost, another Gob Squad member, "Intimitet i samtale-køkkenet – Interview med Bastian Trost i anledning af "Gob Squads Kitchen"" (2009), Trosts notes that the performers in *Gob Squad's Kitchen* have taken Nico's words about wishing somebody else would take over her life literally by making somebody else, the audience, take over their roles (Trosts in Schultz 2009:96).[47] Schultz argues that the fact that they take over each other's roles means that that there is a constant negotiation at play about what we see (Schultz 2009:94). Trost explains, that the performers try to turn the audience into the real stars of the show and that this is due to an understanding informed by Warhol of how when you see a

[47] Schultz, title in English: "Intimacy in the Kitchen – Interview with Sebastian Trost in the event of "Gob Squad's Kitchen"" 2009.

person's face for the first time, and the person says a few lines; the person is transformed into a star. As Smith also argues, it is easier to identify with an unknown person than a skilled star actor because their technique stands in the way (Trost in Schultz 2009:95-96). According to Schultz' interview with Trost, the performers imitate Warhol's production of everyday stars. They tell the audience, "You are a star," just like (Smith and) Warhol put anybody in front of a camera a told them, "You are a star." Gob Squad points out that they are critical, they are not stars and the audience are not stars, but there are moments where you can imagine it (Schultz 2009:99):

> What you do with a star is that you take something from another person and enlarge it fiercely. But it does not have anything to do with that person anymore. It is your own imagination at work. Hollywood has a business, where they do this professionally and they do it skillfully but behind it there is still this person who is exactly like you (Bastian Trost in Schultz: 2009:99, my translation).

In *Gob Squad's Kitchen*, the participants disincarnate the Warhol superstars since the constructed frame of the incarnation setup is fully visible to the audience. But, as Schultz also points out, despite the visible construction Gob Squad's performances can still be very moving (Schultz 2009:98). Disincarnation is the overall practice of the performance through the mixture of different concepts of character such as the anti-illusionary direction of the audience, postdramatic use of technology, and Artaudian bodily focus and participation. The body of the audience member is placed at the center of the performance, which paves the way for emotional identification. In participatory theater, your body is activated and your emotional and sensory memory therefore stronger.

Hamlet, *Crossword Pit Stop*, *Pretty Woman a/s* and *Gob Squad's Kitchen* share the use of the disincarnation practice by combining the exhibition of a constructed setup or representational frame, focus on the body à la Artaud, postdramatic use of technology and a negotiation of presence, authenticity, and emotional identification from the classical tradition. Disincarnation and the post-performative I are also reflected in the practices of The Wooster Group, Rimini Protokoll, Fix & Foxy, and Gob Squad because they include the performative self-consciousness by insisting on critical self-reflection on the self in relation to society (not secluded self-referentiality) and transgress the performative self-consciousness by also insisting on emotional identification.

Failure aesthetic: Mis-hearings and mis-seeings tell a transformative truth

The director of the British performance theater group Forced Entertainment Tim Etchells wrote *Certain Fragments* (1999) to describe the artistic processes of the group. The group has worked together since 1984 and is inspired by The Wooster Group. The work of Forced Entertainment is characterized by disincarnation via the traffic between different acting methods. Similar to The Wooster Group, there is no hierarchy in work methods or prescription to one single concept of character or acting method; the group cultivates improvisation and an assemblage of character concepts, as Etchells sees theater and performance "as a space in which different visions, different sensibilities, different intentions could collide" (Etchells 1999:55). For Etchells, authenticity in acting is connected to the failure aesthetic; however, a much more calculated concept of failure than in Smith's practice. In the chapter "On Risk and Investment," Etchells explains how investment is related to taking risks as a performer. He feels that when a performer exposes him- or herself to risk or is "bound up" in the performance, then the audience will be the same (Etchells 1999:48). Risks catch us off guard; we are not in complete control or inside our comfort zone, which is interesting to watch. Referring to investment, Etchells explain, "Investment wants us naked, with slips and weaknesses, with all that isn't finished, with all that's unclear and therefore needs to be worked out. Don't give me anything less than this. Don't give me a truth that's more fixed, i.e., more of a stupid lie" (Etchells 1999:49). Here, Etchells connects truth and authenticity to risk, investment, slips, weaknesses, and the unfinished. The group's work is characterized by Deleuzian variations and becoming. Etchells uses play as an important element because he sees play as a state "in which meaning is flux, in which possibilities thrive, in which versions multiply, in which the confines of what is real are blurred, buckled, broken. Play as endless transformation, transformation without end and never stillness" (Etchells 1999:52). Therefore, Etchells trusts mistakes and misunderstandings. Examples of misunderstandings could be a performer mishearing an instruction or a performer throwing a ball in the air that the other performers mis-see, or mis-hear or fail to catch resulting in something surprising happening (Etchells 1999:55). It is never about a finished, neat unity but about difference (Etchells 1999:56). Etchells explains that he watches videotapes from rehearsals where interesting material had come out of risk-taking and playful improvisations so that the accident can be re-produced (Etchells 1999:68). This corresponds to the working process that I observed at The Wooster Group. Every rehearsal is recorded on video so LeCompte can play it back if needed and material produced from mistakes, and failures in improvisation can be re-represented. Somehow, it seems contradictory to re-represent the spontaneous. Smith does not work with this type of representation. He has no conventional rehearsal process where the

material generated through improvisation is organized. His performance is on-going without clear divisions between rehearsal and performance. Although The Wooster Group continues to work on and tweak a piece during the show's run and in that sense, is never finished, it stops when they are "off stage," out of rehearsal, or done with the night's performance. Smith's performance never ends, his performance never finishes, it is more or less ongoing throughout his adult life. Life and work become one.

Smith escapes representation to a certain extent by performing on the spot, in the present, making mistakes here-and-now. Smith's practice inspired performance theater; however, The Wooster Group and Forced Entertainment do not take the Smithian ideals about the unfinished, anti-unity, risk-taking, and failure aesthetic to the same performative level.

Epilogue

Disincarnation: the character as assemblage

In her book *Staying With the Trouble: Making Kin in the Chthulucene* (2016) Donna J. Haraway aims to stay with the trouble of our world on the brink of environmental destruction. Haraway encourages us to respond, not as individuals, but by making-with each other in new constellations to come up with imaginative responses (Haraway 2016:1-4). I open my conclusion with the reference to Haraway because disincarnation is not an attempt to simplify the question about character but to present it as a movement across character concepts piecing together different character concepts into a mosaic. I have tried to stay with the trouble and complexity of character and presence through the assemblage of character. Haraway uses several SF figures such as science fiction, string figures, and science fact (Haraway 2016:2). The string figure metaphor is descriptive of this dissertation in both form and content since the character as assemblage comprises a practice that specializes in making patterns with others such as other bodies, sexes, objects, species, technology, and so forth – one could add character concepts. Smith's oeuvre is fluid and complex and dances across character concepts, across genres and other categories. Life and art are entangled. The mosaic structure is reflected in the structure of this dissertation, which is a tapestry of theoretical, analytical and critical/political objectives. Disincarnation is presented as a new conceptual/theoretical angle on the character. The objective of the analysis of Smith's practice was to put disincarnation to work. The critical/political objective of disincarnation was to show the positive potential of the BwO and abjection in Smith's practice, offering new forms of ethics.

This dissertation by no means pretends or intends to provide a comprehensive presentation and analysis of Smith's practice or the development and status of the character. Both undertakings would be too extensive to fit into any one dissertation. The purpose of the dissertation has been to point out how Smith's assemblage with Montez supplements our understanding of Fuchs' multiple subject in performance theater.

I conclude that Smith's practice oscillates between the incarnation and simultaneous destabilization of Maria Montez. This corresponds to an assemblage of the classical and postdramatic concept of character. To understand the merging of these traditionally binary oppositions, I have developed the term disincarnation from Smith's practice. Disincarnation is a material Deleuze and Guattarian assemblage of the four concepts of character: the classical

cohesive and psychological, the Brechtian discursive, the Artaudian material, and the postdramatic deconstructed. My research contribution is disincarnation as a supplement to Fuchs' postmodern character concept and Hans-Thies Lehmann's postdramatic character as pure deconstruction by extending it to include ideals and elements from classical acting such as emotional identification and release. In addition to this, I argue that the bodily self is also deconstructed in performance theater, which is underexposed in the theories of Fuchs and Lehmann. With Deleuze and Guattari, and supplemented by theories from social constructivism and new materialism, I conclude that this does not lead to an aesthetic of absence; on the contrary, the multiple subject in constant process can be thought together with bodily presence in an exhibition of dynamic bodily presence.

Disincarnation extends Muñoz's disidentification to bodily realization and character concepts in performance theater. When it comes to character formation in relation to dominant acting theories, Jack Smith and performers in performance theater do not completely emotionally immerse themselves into or incarnate the characters (Stanislavski/Strasberg), nor do they reach absolute bodily presence (Artaud). They do not solely critically counterincarnate the character (Bertolt Brecht), nor do they solely deconstruct character (postdramatic). Disincarnation integrates elements from all four concepts into a character assemblage. By oscillating between the four concepts of character, the discursive and the material converge. Deleuze and Guattari's concepts of the BwO, becoming, and the rhizome share a life in the land of dissolved binaries and ongoing process that is useful to examining disincarnation. Disincarnation is a practice that thinks across stable categories and furthers the establishing of new and more inclusive ethical-political categories. As an example Smith's drag characters represent more inclusive categories as in-between creatures dissolving binary cuts between male/female, human/animal, mind/body.

The dissertation has outlined how there has been a general movement from a stable to an unstable subject in Western thinking especially since the early 20th century. This movement is also reflected on stage through the four concepts of character. The classical concept exhibits a stable and consistent character development. Theatrical presence, authenticity, and truth are connected to a full immersion of the character within an enclosed stage illusion. With the Brechtian concept, authenticity and presence are reached by constantly breaking the illusion of character to exhibit the true reality of theater. For Artaud, absolute bodily presence is the goal. In the postdramatic concept of character, the character is deconstructed, and the impossibility of presence or failure to exhibit presence is thematicized through authenticity effects and a mix of the real and the theatrical. I make the case that in Smith's practice the body can be thought

together with a subject in constant change; this does not produce absence but a dynamic bodily presence. In his failure aesthetic the fake, abject, and failed leads to the genuine and authentic.
I have analyzed Smith's practice as an exemplary case study for disincarnation. I conclude that Smith idolizes the actress Maria Montez to the extent that the distinction between them collapses. Similarly, the life/art, trash/glamour, male/female dichotomies and distinctions between genres are blurred in Smith's practice. Smith's life was an on-going performance. On the basis of Smith's acting manifestos, I analyzed how Smith's practice is characterized by the merging of Artaudian Dionysian bodily presence, Brechtian montage and alienation effects, and the postdramatic multiple drag subject. In all of Smith's work, the securing of Montez in an oriental failure aesthetic that springs from Smith's personal and political identification with Montez, anchors his multiple drag characters and performative hybrids and create a consistency that reminds me of the classical tradition. Smith never settles in one of the four concepts of characters, nor is he ever Montez. His flaming creatures exhibit identities in constant variation. This adds a feeling of suspense and a masochist aesthetic to disincarnation. Disincarnation refers to character as assemblage and the bodily self as deconstructed; however, small pockets of subjectification and identification are left: Emotional identification à la Strasberg comes across in Smith's acting style in the sense that he identified emotionally with Montez as cast out of Hollywood. Smith cultivates this position and transforms her and his fascination with Hollywood into a critique of Hollywood's orientalism, capitalism, and heteronormativty. Smith is becoming-Montez by taking on not only her clothes and looks but also her behavior. Smith identified emotionally and politically with the revolutionary behavior he saw in her: her failed acting and screen presence.
In Smith's practice, the use of surface effects leads to the inside: Smith's appropriation of Montez's outer characteristics leads to his emotional identification with her.
Smith embraces the abject such as homosexuality, the monster, disease, and death and thereby punctures and resignifies its dark powers. The bodily self as deconstructed and its dynamic bodily presence are closely related to abjection and failure. Smith's abject failure aesthetic, drag characters, and confounding devices heighten the attention of the audience and create dynamic bodily presence. As such, Smith refuses the heteronormative regime, capitalism, and the symbolic order's humiliation and persecution of minorities in acts of life-affirming defiance and exhibits new positive (bodily) possibilities.
Using feminist theorists Elizabeth Grosz, Rosi Braidotti, and Karen Barad as well as Deleuze and Guattari, I conclude that gender-critical strategies are at play in Smith's practice that are not about privileging either a male or a female agent but about dissolving the classical gender model

and calling attention to the nature of materiality itself. With Karen Barad, I conclude that Smith enacts new cuts exhibiting new possibilities and more ethical-political categories. Smith's drag characters are examples of how the material and the discursive converge: The bodily reality points to the constructions, for example, the heterosexual matrix with which it intersects.
I conclude that Smith's predecessors in the avant-garde and his successors in performance theater share the disincarnation practice, the character as assemblage, the presentation of the abject body and a critique of commercialism, consumerism, and capitalism. They also share an ethical-political message about giving voice to minorities and an active materiality in constant change.

Disincarnation: the character as assemblage in performance theater

What goes on in European and American performance theater? My answer is disincarnation: artists pluck freely from the four concepts of character, reassembling character into a dynamic material assemblage with ethical-political implications. The character as assemblage is made up by different concepts of character, never settling in any one method, which produces dynamic bodily presence and dramatic suspense. Elements from the classical tradition are represented such as reworkings of emotional identification and dramatic action. Examples of aspects of disincarnation in performance theater include The Wooster Group's practice where the characters are split by technology. However, the bodily self as split and deconstructed points to the materiality and presence of the performer and exhibits dynamic bodily presence. Another aspect of disincarnation is found in reality theater where real bodies or everyday experts on stage invoke emotional identification and presence for the audience. In participatory theater, bodily and emotional identification converge, resulting in dynamic bodily presence when participants interact. In all these cases, incarnation takes place alongside the revelation and exhibition of the constructed nature of the incarnation: disincarnation.
Another element from the classical tradition in performance theater is a reworking of ideals of consistency and coherence in the events on stage. In performance theater, it is not a linear narrative within an enclosed fictional space that provides consistency but sometimes rather a task to be solved, such as the reenactment or remediation of a film, a classical drama, or novel, or a YouTube video. The task anchors the assemblage of character concepts and provides a common purpose for performers and audience. For both the audience and the performers it is possible to immerse themselves emotionally into a character and the events on stage while being aware of and showing the constructed nature of this immersion. One does not exclude the other. In The

Wooster Group's *Hamlet*, the performers are immersed in the Burton performers' performance while being aware of, showing, and commenting on the constructed nature of this immersion. With disincarnation, I argue that the bodily self is also deconstructed in performance theater. However, a multiple subject can be thought together with character, self, psychology, and bodily presence. The multiple subject does not dissolve them but reassembles and rethinks them as dynamic phenomena.

Disincarnation: Future research perspectives

I advocate that disincarnation will be useful in further examining the relationship between the body, character, and new and more inclusive ethical-political categories in contemporary art, performance, theater, and film and how in contemporary art an ethical-political cut seems to take place across the subject.

The disincarnation practice will also help further unpack character as assemblage and develop contemporary acting theory, especially in terms of the co-existence of anti-illusionary breaks and emotional immersion in character representation. I also suggest a further examination of the absorption of elements from the theater of images and physical theater into mainstream/classical theater on the one hand, and, on the other hand, the absorption of the dramatic in the postdramatic.

A common focus through these different aspects of disincarnation and its effects would be a further analysis of how disincarnation and assemblage characters perform figures of resistance under different cultural and political conditions, not least in times of authoritarian regimes, historically as well as presently. Especially the transitions between the 1920s liberal Western culture and the 1930s authoritarian regimes would be interesting to investigate from the perspective of acting styles and character formation in stage performance as well as in the broader context of cultural performance. For instance, the exchanges and transferences between avant-garde artists' bohemian life-style and public performance, and the celebrity culture and Hollywood star system seem to bear witness to simultaneous progressive and reactionary cultural forces, displayed as negotiations over character formation and the cultural production of subjectivity. It is in these early decades of the 20th century that the character concepts we recognize in contemporary practices of disincarnation materialize and come into play.

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Thom can be found in, “Rapport fra seminar om deltagerinvolverende scenekunst på Teater Momentum den 7. Marts 2015.” Accessed May 10, 2017: file:///Users/metterisgardtranholm/Downloads/Deltagerinvolverende_scenekunst_seminar_rapport_Momentum_marts_2015%20(1).pdf

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Abstract

Elinor Fuchs has famously proclaimed the death of the classical character in postmodern theater and replaced it with a multiple subject on stage. The main thesis of this dissertation is that alongside Fuchs' deconstructivist multiple subject an opposite movement is at play reassembling character by negotiating ideals from the classical character concept. To create a more nuanced understanding of character representation in performance theater, my dissertation presents the term *disincarnation*. I present the American performer and filmmaker Jack Smith as an exemplary case study for disincarnation. As a central figure in American underground cinema and performance art, Smith inspired Laurie Anderson and many other prominent performance artists, as well as Andy Warhol's superstar concept, which Warhol appropriated from Smith. Smith presented multiple drag characters and an abject aesthetic inspired by his obsession with the actress Maria Montez. Smith disincarnates Montez by appropriating her external characteristics but simultaneously exhibiting the constructed nature of this incarnation. Smith's practice oscillates between the incarnation of Maria Montez and the destabilization of this incarnation through various drag versions of her and a failure aesthetic. This dissertation examines character representation in Jack Smith's practice as disincarnation: an assemblage of four traditionally colliding character concepts: the classical, Brechtian, Artaudian, and the postdramatic. Smith's Montez disincarnation comes with an ethical-political agenda that entails gender and capitalist-critical strategies. By identifying with Montez as abject and failure, Smith resignifies the failed, abject or queer body exhibiting its positive possibilities and energies. The objective of the dissertation is – through Smith – to understand character representation in between incarnation and deconstruction, the dramatic and the theatrical. Disincarnation is a material assemblage of concepts of character that reveals a different side to the deconstructive and postmodern in questions about the body and emotional layers. Disincarnation uncovers that the conflict and gap between classical and postmodern and postdramatic are not as wide as we think. With the disincarnation practice, we are better equipped to detect, analyze, and understand character representation in a world where the dramatic and the theatrical coexist and where the body and bodily presence can be thought together with a subject in constant change. The dissertation combines theater and performance theory with Deleuze-Gauttarian and new materialist theories to analyze how the disincarnation practice reassembles character as well as the body into dynamic phenomena.

Resumé (in Danish)

Elinor Fuchs har proklameret karakterens død i postmoderne teater og erstattet karakteren med et flerfoldigt ustabilt subjekt på scenen. Afhandlingens hovedtese er, at der side om side med Fuchs' dekonstruktivistiske ustabile subjekt er en modsatrettet bevægelse i spil, der genopliver karakteren via en genforhandling af idealer fra det klassiske karakterkoncept. For at skabe en mere nuanceret forståelse af karakterrepræsentation i performanceteatret introducerer afhandlingen begrebet *disinkarnering*. Den amerikanske performer og filmmager Jack Smith præsenteres som et eksemplarisk case study for disinkarnering. Som en central figur i amerikansk undergrundsfilm og performancekunst har Smith inspireret Laurie Anderson og mange andre performancekunstnere, ligesom Andy Warhol overtog sit superstar-koncept fra Smith. Smith præsenterede ustabile dragkarakterer og en abjekt æstetik inspireret af en besættelse af skuespillerinden Maria Montez. Smith disinkarnerer Montez ved at appropriere hendes eksterne karakteristika side om side med en udstilling af den konstruerede natur af denne inkarnering. Smith's praksis svinger mellem inkarneringen af Maria Montez og destabiliseringen af denne inkarnering via et utal af dragversioner af hende samt en fejlæstetik. Afhandlingen undersøger karakterrepræsentation i Smiths praksis som disinkarnering: karakteren som en assemblage af fire traditionelt modstridende karakterkoncepter: det klassiske, Brechtske, Artaudske og det postdramatiske. Smiths Montez-disinkarnering indebærer en etisk-politisk dagsorden, der rummer køns- og kapitalistkritiske strategier. Ved at identificere sig med Montez som abjekt falleret B-films skuespillerinde resignifierer Smith det fejlagtige, abjekte samt queer kroppen og udstiller dens positive muligheder og energier. Formålet med afhandlingen er gennem Smith at forstå karakterrepræsentation imellem inkarnering og dekonstruktion, det dramatiske og det teatrale. Disinkarnering er en materiel assemblage af karakterkoncepter, der afslører en anden side af det dekonstruktivistiske og postmoderne i spørgsmål om kroppen og emotionelle lag. Disinkarnering afdækker hvorledes konflikten og skellet mellem det klassiske og det postmoderne ikke er så dyb, som vi tror. Med en disinkarneringspraksis er vi bedre rustede til at udpege, analysere og forstå karakterrepræsentation i en verden, hvor det dramatiske og teatrale sameksisterer, og hvor kroppen og kropsligt nærvær kan tænkes sammen med et ustabilt subjekt i konstant forandringsproces. Afhandlingen kombinerer teater- og performanceteori med Deleuze-Gauttari og ny materialisme for at analysere, hvordan en disinkarneringspraksis genopliver karakter såvel som krop, som dynamiske fænomener.